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INTRODUCTION

0.1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEMATIC

This study is devoted to an examination of a concept of crucial significance for Soviet aesthetics – the concept of the aesthetic (*estetičeskoe*). Soviet aestheticians have for some time already been trying to design a concept of the aesthetic that would satisfy, on the one hand, the requirements of aesthetic phenomena, and, on the other hand, the principles of the Marxist-Leninist world view.

The first part of this work shows how the concept of the aesthetic has been and continues to be problematic for Soviet aestheticians. This task is carried out by dwelling, first of all, on the controversies among Soviet aestheticians concerning meta-aesthetic issues, viz, the nature and scope of aesthetics as well as its place among other philosophical and non-philosophical disciplines. A particularly clear view of the problems that have traditionally preoccupied Soviet aestheticians is provided by an examination of what they standardly call the 'method of aesthetics', where 'method' is understood in the sense of an explanatory framework rather than in the strict logico-scientific sense of the term. This discussion will provide the occasion to pass in review the main periods of Soviet aesthetics and the characteristic aspects of each.

The chapter on the sources of contemporary Marxist-Leninist aesthetics brings into relief the lack of a homogeneous tradition in the question of the nature of the aesthetic and other related problems. The main issue among those examined in this chapter will have to do with conflicting elements in the doctrines of the forbears of contemporary Soviet aesthetics.

Lest the reader wonder why the chapter about the sources of Soviet aesthetics falls in second place, it should be stressed here, that, as far as the author is concerned, the 'aesthetics' of Marx, Engels and Lenin has to be interpolated into their writings. Accordingly, the definitions of aesthetics and its methods in the first chapter provide the standards with which to assess the Soviets' claims about the allegedly developed aesthetic views of the 'Classics'. Furthermore, this approach reveals that Soviet aestheticians took different portions of the 'classics'' doctrines at different periods, depending on the

prevailing point of view on meta-aesthetic issues (e.g. the definition of the object of aesthetics and its relation to Marxist-Leninist philosophy).

At the end of the first part it should be clear that the problems confronting Soviet aestheticians as to the nature and scope of their discipline are to a large extent dependent on the solution of the philosophical question concerning the nature of the aesthetic as such.

The second part of the study is concentrated on the first, and so far most intensive Soviet discussion of the philosophical foundations of aesthetics, viz. the discussion that took place from 1956 to circa 1964–1965. The conceptions of the two most important schools of thought of that period, the societalists (*obščestvenniki*) and the naturists (*prirodniki*), are set forth and analyzed in Chapter Four. In order to illuminate the characteristic bent of their thinking, however, the preceding chapter is devoted to the essential questions undertaken by all sides in the controversy. Here it will be important to bring out as clearly as possible the philosophical framework within which Soviet aestheticians of the day had to work. The last chapter, finally, comes back to the leading philosophical differences that caused the split among the aestheticians into the two aforementioned schools of thought.

The conclusion will be a summary as well as an attempt to assess the impact of the *estetičeskoe* discussion on the more recent Soviet treatments of similar questions.

0.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND ITS INTRINSIC INTEREST

The main purpose is to show how and why Soviet aestheticians have encountered considerable difficulties in resolving the question of the aesthetic in the context of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. The various options open to Soviet aestheticians in this regard – e.g. to name the most obvious ones, to consider aesthetics in the light of the Leninist reflection theory of knowledge as a doctrine about art truthfully reproducing reality, or in the light of Marxian socio-economic doctrine as a theory about art as form of social consciousness or as a theory of the differentiation of social practice into artistic activity, etc. – are examined from the Soviet perspective as they have been employed singly or in combination to explain the aesthetic.

Notwithstanding Marxist Leninist methodological directives, Soviet aestheticians increasingly came to the realization that the very essence of the phenomena they were concerned with had so far eluded them. One important reason they offered for that state of affairs was precisely their traditionally great dependence on the philosophical axioms of their world view. It had

been too easy to pass off as meaningful pronouncements in aesthetic theory what it truth were hardly more than disguised positions from Marxist-Leninist epistemology, sociology, etc.

It could be said, that, although they were familiar with the concepts and chief problems of aesthetics as these had developed throughout the centuries prior to the emergence of Marxism, Soviet aestheticians had still to carry out the foundamental revision of aesthetics that the 'classics' are purported to have carried out for, say, economic theory, sociology, etc. This meant basically that instead of merely dressing up non-aesthetic concepts and theories in a raiment alien to them, Soviet aestheticians were obliged to 'generate' a properly 'Marxist-Leninist' aesthetic, capable not only of justifying itself but of proving its superiority.

The search for the philosophical foundations of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics involves at least the following two interrelated issues. The first has to do with the description of Soviet aesthetics as 'Marxist-Leninist'. What does it mean to speak of a 'Marxist-Leninist aesthetics'?

One answer that naturally comes to mind is that this designation simply means that Soviet aesthetics is grounded in the Marxist-Leninist world view. Prescinding here from the examination of the question of what it means in general to ground one discipline in another, the foregoing answer might conceivably be taken in a methodological spirit. If it is agreed that the components of Marxism-Leninism are a unique and distinct philosophy, economic theory and theory of political action, then Marxist-Leninist aesthetics would be the discipline that supports its claims on the claims of these more basic, encompassing, unique and distinct doctrines.

Now, although Soviet aestheticians would hardly deny these points, it seems that the discussion about the aesthetic involved more than this. For it was this very conception of the dependency of aesthetics on philosophy that began to trouble specialists increasingly, especially since the mid-fifties. Some aestheticians doubted whether the claims formulated in their discipline were not simply identical with rather than dependent on philosophical, etc. claims. It was unclear whether in dealing with, e.g., works of art they were carrying out analyses of objects conventionally designated as works of art in the light of superimposed Marxist-Leninist categories, or whether *genuine* works of art, etc. had, so to speak, a 'Marxist-Leninist essence', i.e. satisfied the conditions for genuine works of art developed in Marxist-Leninist aesthetics.

The other side of the problem of the designation 'Marxist-Leninist aesthetics', therefore, is the problem of the 'specific' object of the discipline characterized in this way. 'Specific object' does not mean in this case a choice

between works of art and, e.g., the investigation of natural beauty. It primarily means the underlying essence of all phenomena standardly grouped under the general term 'the aesthetic'. It can be said, therefore, that a chief goal of aestheticians beginning in the mid-fifties was *to generate an autonomous Marxist-Leninist aesthetics founded on a new and adequate definition of the aesthetic, a definition which would be organically and not just accidentally related to the Marxist-Leninist world view.*

Admittedly, this kind of inquiry was not altogether without precedent in the Marxist-Leninist tradition. As will be seen in more detail below, Soviet aesthetics sometimes suffered vicissitudes occasioned by the strident views of its more zealous practitioners. It had not been unusual in earlier periods to hear criticisms directed at the bourgeois mentality that created reactionary fantasies about the beautiful or the expressiveness of art for its own sake, etc. Calls for the destruction of the culture of the past or for an aesthetic without the beautiful are but two examples, negative though they be, of the 'search' for a properly Marxist-Leninist conception of the aesthetic and cultural phenomena in general.

In this connection one of the most provocative premisses of the Marxist outlook on art is the view, seemingly originating with Marx himself, that art as it is practiced in bourgeois civilization is a transient and historically circumscribed phenomenon. It exists in the form it does because men in bourgeois society need to transcend the social and economic conditions that are in reality inimical to the deployment of the individual's creative energies. Art in bourgeois society is a pale reflection of what labor will become in Communist society, namely creative activity free from constraint. Does this mean that in Communist society art will disappear, that it will have no function in the society of harmoniously attuned individuals? These questions suppose that the Soviet aesthetician examines the concept of the aesthetic from the standpoint of his overall orientation on man, the universe, etc. in order to grasp the historically true and final essence of this phenomenon. The philosophical foundations of Soviet aesthetics, therefore, are by no means of secondary importance.

Inquiries of a purely conceptual character occupied a preeminent place in the works of Soviet writers on this subject. So much so, in fact, that most frequently they failed to present any empirically acquired and confirmed knowledge about aesthetic phenomena.

This last point can be clarified if we compare – momentarily and superficially to be sure – the Marxist-Leninist enterprise with one of the most highly nuanced contemporary doctrines, viz. that of the Polish phenomenologist, Roman Ingarden.

According to Ingarden (1970), aesthetics is a philosophical discipline subdivided into the following strictly ordered parts:

– ontology of works of art,
– ontology of aesthetic objects,
– phenomenology of creativity,
– phenomenology of artistic style in relation to values,
– analyses of artistic qualities and aesthetic values,
– phenomenology of aesthetic experience,
– epistemology of aesthetic cognition (or works of art and aesthetic objects and values),
– the philosophy of art (e.g. art's function, 'metaphysical' value, etc.).

Ingarden always begins his analyses by describing (phenomenology) concrete works of art in order to discover the essential interconnections of their constitutive traits (ontology) and the manner in which they are like or unlike – both formally and in their mode of existence – other objects. He proceeds in the same way for aesthetic values, experiences, etc. Nothing is taken for granted and generalizations that carry beyond what is given in descriptions are avoided. Above all, Ingarden does not allow theoretical constructions to replace direct contact with objects in experience. Only after results have been acquired on this path does Ingarden raise questions belonging to the last named set of problems above. Yet answers to these questions are frequently difficult to come by since they usually presuppose knowledge about phenomena belonging to other domains of reality.

Now, on the whole the Marxist-Leninist takes quite the opposite approach. It is precisely the last set of problems on Ingarden's list that preoccupied Soviet aestheticians in the period mainly interesting us here. Many of the questions remaining on Ingarden's list were simply dealt with peremptorily or not even formulated. The situation is explainable in part by the doctrine of Socialist Realism: the model of genuine art in socialist society was at the disposal of the Soviet aestheticians. Hence, much about many associated questions is thereby at least sketched out. What Soviet aestheticians are expected to say about creativity, e.g., is predetermined to a large extent by the definition of realism as the method of artistic creation, and so on.

Yet judging by the history of the discussion since 1956, preconceptions do not appear to have straitjacketed Soviet aestheticians in their quest for the philosophical foundations of aesthetics. What is even surprising is the amount of freedom they have had in coping with this problem. The *estetičeskoe* discussion is interesting precisely because it was an occasion for some Soviet aestheticians to begin to employ their philosophical system in an innovative

and critical way. In seeking for the Marxist-Leninist essence of the aesthetic they simultaneously probed the presuppositions of their world view as to the situation of, e.g., man vis-à-vis nature, of practice with regard to knowledge, of the individual within society, and other related questions. It is precisely at this juncture that the appeal by certain aestheticians to the early writings of Karl Marx was not just aesthetically, but also and primarily philosophically important.

This initiative and freedom can be explained to some extent by the relatively undeveloped state of the conceptual framework with which Soviet aestheticians had been working. If research into the foundations of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic was to proceed, new concepts and categories would have to be introduced. For example, a category, which is central to Soviet aesthetics today, viz. that of the aesthetic appropriation by man of reality, came into circulation as a result of the intense work done starting in the mid-fifties.

As speculative as it may finally have been, therefore, the *estetičeskoe* controversy nevertheless contributed, on the one hand, to throwing into relief glaring insufficiencies in Soviet views on this matter, and, on the other, to enriching the stock of concepts in use to deal with it. Here again the discovery of the young Marx is philosophically significant. It effectively demonstrated the impoverished character of official Marxism-Leninism and it implied that, if the claims of the aestheticians were to be taken seriously, changes, 'revisions' might have to be effected in that official doctrine.

Finally, apart from the immediate results of that discussion, it also played a significant role in opening up perspectives. It is arguable, for example, that Soviet axiology, which blossomed only inthe sixties, owes a debt to the theories of the societalists, prominent participants in the *estetičeskoe* question. And it is generally recognized that the speculative character of that discussion eventually forced aestheticians to turn to more exact and, in principle, verifiable, empirical and formal methods of inquiry.

0.3. LITERATURE AND METHOD

The complete bibliography of Soviet aesthetics since circa 1947 would be too vast to be the subject of one study. As it is the complete literature relating just to the principal subject of this work, the philosophical foundations of aesthetics is also copious and could not be conveniently collected and exhaustively examined.

Fortunately, however, the essential literature on this question was easily identifiable thanks to the polemic that arose between the two schools of

thought mentioned above. The attention of all sides in this controversy, direct participants as well as outside critics, eventually centered on several persons and their works, and these became the rallying point for both camps (for details see Chapter Three).

Although matters relating to the appreciation and criticism of art are a frequent and popular subject of articles and essays in all manner of publications in the Soviet Union, ranging from newspapers to feuilletons to scholarly journals, the brunt of the *estetičeskoe* controversy was shuffled onto the pages of leading philosophical journals, *Voprosy filosofii* and *Filosofskie nauki*, as well as on the main journal of literary criticism, *Voprosy literatury*. These journals created special rubrics under which interested parties could publish their opinions; they eventually provided summaries of the discussions and even evaluated the worth of the different arguments. For all these reasons identification of the most important literature has been neither haphazard nor difficult. Finally, *Voprosy estetiki* for 1971, which contains Tasalov (1971), provides a selective but very representative bibliography.

The choice of literature has been further simplified by deciding to exclude Socialist Realism from systematic discussion. There are several reasons for this decision. Socialist realism is defined as the method of artistic creation in the light of the ideals of Socialism and Communism. Even though it occupies a front-line spot in Soviet ideology and public discussion, its theme of artistic creation and its social conditions comes relatively late in the *system* of Soviet aesthetics. Discussion of the point is preceded by the subjects that will hold our attention here: the nature of the aesthetic and the aesthetic categories of which artistic creativity is just one, though admittedly the most important instance.

Furthermore, the ideological principles that motivate Socialist Realism are certainly not absent from the minds of the philosophical aestheticians, such that explicit thematization of the doctrine of Socialist Realism will not shed any new light on them. As a way of confirming the last point, it is sufficient to cast a glance at the situation of Socialist Realism since its promulgation in 1934 in relation to the divergent conceptions of philosophical aesthetics from that time. The only conclusion to be reached is that it managed to survive unscathed in spite of the more fundamental discussions that carried aesthetic theory from 'vulgar' sociologism and gnoseologism (discussed in detail in Chapter One), through the period of interest to us here, to the more recent axiological conceptions of the aesthetic. This is not to imply that there are no points in common among these doctrines of the aesthetic, or that Socialist Realism does not exert an influence on Soviet aestheticians. It does imply,

however, that the doctrine of Socialist Realism does not provide a sufficiently elaborate framework to assist aestheticians in their labors.

The last observation to be made here has to do with non-Soviet sources. In the first place, the theories of non-Soviet Marxists, be they in Eastern or Western Europe or elsewhere, are left out of account. Soviet and non-Soviet Marxist aestheticians frequently work from vastly different backgrounds and have different perspectives. Of the latter, some are highly critical of their Soviet colleagues and are promptly branded by the latter as revisionists (e.g. the well-known cases of Lukács, Ernst Fischer and Roger Garaudy). Others, e.g. Polish Marxist aestheticians, owe a debt of gratitude to a highly sophisticated cultural and philosophical tradition in their own countries, one which grew up long before the advent of the Communist regimes (e.g. Stefan Morawski, perhaps the most prominent Polish Marxist aesthetician, has been profoundly influenced by Ingarden's aesthetics). Finally, the virtual absence of references by Soviet aestheticians to any other but their co-workers makes such a comparison less interesting, especially when Soviet philosophical aesthetics is so little known in the West.

The only exception to this decision has to do with the work of Morawski. In his systematic and historical work he has consistently studied and evaluated a wide sampling of Soviet aesthetic thought. As far as this writer is aware, his study from 1964 is the only extant study outside the Soviet Union on Soviet philosophical aesthetics and related themes. For this reason his opinions have been reported here and there throughout this study.

Non-Marxist literature on the subject proved to present no difficulties: there is too little of it to be of much importance and what there is, is hardly more than cursory reporting. It is perhaps symptomatic of the opinion of Western scholars about the state of Soviet philosophical aesthetics that *Studies in Soviet Thought* has in its sixteen-year history published only two short articles on the subject (see Bibliography: Fizer (1964) and Laszlo (1964)). And whereas monographs on Socialist Realism and the history of various art forms in the Soviet Union are not infrequent, not a single large work exists that is devoted to the subjects concerning us here.

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE OBJECT AND METHODS OF SOVIET AESTHETICS

1.1. THE GENERAL STATE OF SOVIET AESTHETICS

Despite the more than twenty years of relatively open and far-ranging discussions on aesthetic matters, Soviet aestheticians have yet to settle on a definition of their discipline which would meet with universal approval. One Soviet article recently listed no less than six alternative characterizations of the discipline held during the period 1959–1963.[1] And whereas periodic accounts by Soviet aestheticians of their own work used to lament the lack of a single, commonly accepted characterization of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, many contemporary statements propose 'open', changeable definitions in order to reflect the dynamic state of the arts in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries better by that means.

Though strange at first, given the doctrinal assumptions shared by all Soviet philosophers, including aestheticians, viz. the Marxist-Leninist world view, this situation can be explained as follows.

In the first place, the 'classics', Marx, Engels and Lenin, whatever else their contributions to Soviet aesthetic doctrine might have been, did not hand down a definition of aesthetics.[2] It is precisely the reliance of Soviet aestheticians on the classics, especially on Marx and Engels, that is one of the major sources of obstacles confronting them. Most of Marx's and Engels' scattered remarks on aesthetic matters are directed to issues related to the history of art or specific (mostly literary) works of art. A few of their statements, however, appear to be concerned with objective aesthetic properties or qualities inherent in material things as well as with 'laws of beauty' holding good for nature and human affairs alike. Hence, several possibilities for aesthetics are present in the writings of Marx and Engels: aesthetics could be either (1) a theory of art or (2) a theory of beauty (in nature or art or in both, as in the tradition), or (3) both a theory of art and a theory of beauty (it being a matter for further consideration whether and how the two are related). Not surprisingly, since the beginning of the present discussions on aesthetic questions in the Soviet Union, Soviet writers have singled out one or the other of these characterizations and berated proponents of the remaining possibilities as basically anti-Marxist-Leninist in orientation.

A second obstacle lying in the path of a commonly accepted characterization is the absence of a continuous and developing tradition regarding the nature and purpose of aesthetic reflection. The reasons for this are ideological and political. On the ideological side, even though the years 1918 to 1934 were unusually fertile as far as artistic creativity was concerned, the Proletkult movement, including groups like RAPP and VOAPP,[3] was expressly concerned with among other things, ridding the emerging proletarian culture of any elements of bourgeois culture, including the art and aesthetic doctrines of the tradition. Aesthetics as such was superseded by the sociology of art, then interpreted as the search for the 'class equivalent' of every form of art,[4] such that traditional aesthetic categories like the beautiful became suspect. One example of hostile attitudes toward aesthetic problems frequently cited by Soviet authors themselves is extreme but not untypical for that time. In 1931 N. Iezuitov wrote an article for the periodical *Proletarskaja kul'tura* [Proletarian Culture] entitled 'Konec krasote' [An End to Beauty] [5] in which he affirmed in accordance with the anti-Kulak spirit of the day, that beauty is a reactionnary category of idealist aesthetics and not of progressive Soviet policy in matters of art. The author makes his point as follows: "Our proletarian present (*sovremennost'*), our normative Marxist aesthetics, rejects both objective and subjective criteria of beauty, for it . . . is against beauty in general". Even writers who retained the traditional interest in aesthetics as a general theory of art nevertheless felt obliged to renounce their dependence on the category of beauty. L. Ja. Zivel'činskaja wrote: ". . . there is no beauty in itself", adding uncertainly, "there are only objective conditions for the beautiful, but these are not identical to the beautiful".[6] As later Soviet writers were to observe, it was a time when aesthetics was carried on without aesthetic categories.

On the other hand, even though the official promulgation of Socialist Realism in 1934 marked the dissolution of the various groups responsible for the denigration of traditional aesthetic theory, this new current in its turn came to restrict the range of legitimate aesthetic concerns within increasingly narrow confines. Under the tutelage of Ždanov writers on the arts were exhorted to develop the theoretical foundations of Socialist Realism. This meant primarily that the fundamental aesthetic problem became the relation of art to reality interpreted in the light of the Leninist reflection theory of knowledge as this is applied to the theory of social consciousness, which, according to orthodox theory, constitutes the proper realm of artistic phenomena. Soviet art was to be a truthful reflection of the progressive, revolutionary aspirations of the toiling masses building communism. Motivated by this artistc

vision, aesthetic theory was supposed to combine considerations about the cognitive status of art (realism) with Party inspired evaluations of the nature and actual state of development of Soviet society (revolutionary romanticism, heroism), evaluations drawing their criteria from statements by Stalin, Gorkij and Ždanov. Whatever the theory, however, the combination of factors was clearly weighted in favor of the evaluative side. "First discover the connection between art and politics, art and the class struggle, show the party-mindedness of art and only then explain the specificity of art as an artistic reflection of reality".[7] As in the preceding period, aesthetic theory was subordinated to political considerations and traditional aesthetic categories were absent from discussions.

As blameworthy as this overt intrusion by the Party into aesthetic matters may seem, it should not be forgotten that aestheticians in the Soviet Union are bound by the principle of party-mindedness and for that reason they are obliged to participate in the task of Socialist construction, to help create a culture worthy of the New Man promised by the Marxist eschatology. However, an essential difficulty – one rarely if ever discussed by Soviet theoreticians – confronts the builder of the Socialist culture. The goal of Socialist construction is to create the New Man, i.e. the 'whole man' who will integrate what in class society, due to the division of labor and its attendant evils, is diffused into the distinct forms of class consciousness, each of which is ordinarily the province of a social segment. By being reintegrated in a dealienated, liberated consciousness, the forms of social consciousness undergo transformation. Strictly speaking, they cease to have the sense and purpose that accrued to them in class society. For instance, Marxists have considered 'progressive, realist' art in class society as expressive of the ideal of social liberation. Once the revolution has transpired, social reality and ideal are supposed to become one. Art loses its old function; it loses its identity as art. All human activity henceforth takes on the function that previously accrued to art, viz. to be creative in a non-utilitarian way.

The actual Soviet man is neither a vestige of the capitalist, disintegrated man nor yet the fully harmonious creative personality. Hence, in this rather anomalous transitional stage, left out of account by Marx, Socialist culture is left in a nebulous situation. At least it is clear that the Party is justified in assuming leadership.

In short, the ambiguous legacy of the 'classics' and the absence of a cohesive tradition had the combined effect of making it initially unclear to Soviet aestheticians just what the object of their aesthetic should be. Not surprisingly, when the present discussions got under way, some defended the identity

of aesthetic theory with the doctrine of Socialist Realism. But others, after absorbing party sponsored criticism of their work and the work of all philosophers,[8] began to examine afresh the object and general program of a Marxist-Leninist aesthetic. The second issue of *Voprosy filosofii* for 1948 contained a synoptic outline of the contents of a textbook to be entitled *Osnovy marksistskoj-leninskoj estetiki*, [Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics].[9] Just how slow and cautious the ensuing discussion was is evidenced by the fact that the text bearing the above title was not published until 1960.[10] By that time, however, Soviet aestheticians were finally engaged in hammering out the philosophical foundations of their aesthetic.

1.2. THE OBJECT OF AESTHETICS

There has been little unanimity among Marxist authors concerning classifications of the various opposing sides in the controversy over the object of aesthetics. Stefan Morawski, the only non-Soviet aesthetician who has written on Soviet aesthetics, lists three standpoints on the question.[11] Soviet authors usually present two or three points of view (the third frequently being a combination of the preceding pair of opposities).[12] Two aestheticians, however, L. N. Stolovič[13] and A. F. Eremeev,[14] each mention five different standpoints, although their orientations are somewhat different. Finally, we have already mentioned the article, by E. V. Volkova and L. N. Novikova, that lists six different points of view, but which unfortunately does not identify the exponents of these views, thus making verification difficult.[15]

In point of fact, if careful attention is paid to the formulations of the various definitions of aesthetics put forth since c. 1948, as many as ten different characterizations could be singled out. However, the more current views have on the whole grown out of views held earlier and in this way share many of the features of the earlier views. In turn, many of the earlier views, in spite of their apparent mutual opposition, share similar faults and can hence be grouped under common headings. Finally, many points of view in this latter group seem to have been definitely rejected today. Three large groups of theories defining the object of aesthetics can be picked out.

(I) All theories which at one time dichotomized the theory of beauty and the theory of art, or treated one at the expense of the other (i.e. identified aesthetics with the theory of art or the theory of beauty), or, finally, mechanically united the two theories without a clear conception of common features, these theories are on the whole rejected today.

(II) Those theories which (a) maintain that the sphere of that which is

aesthetic (or simply the 'aesthetic') is more extensive than the sphere of that which is artistic (the 'artistic'), and eventually includes the latter, (b) seek to show that the two spheres are founded on a common principle, viz., man's aesthetic 'appropriation' of or 'relation' to reality – these theories, though receiving different interpretations, are the most widespread today.

(III) Those theories which, while preserving the main orientation of the preceding group II, attempt to not only clarify the relevant concepts, but to reformulate the basic problems. Certain aestheticians have introduced the concept of value as the basic object of aesthetics.

(*Ad I*) G. B. Puzis and G. Pospelov represent the view that draws a line between the theory of art and the theory of beauty. According to Puzis, aesthetics has to do with beauty, aesthetic feeling, and taste, whereas art is investigated by a general theory of art, which is not a part of aesthetics.[16] More recently, Pospelov put forward the view that what has commonly been known as aesthetics belongs in fact to the general theory of art. Only the latter has the status of an independent science, because it alone has a specific object, viz. the history of art and its laws of development. Aesthetics, on the other hand, is deprived of a specific object because it is concerned with the beauty of all reality and its phenomena, but only in so far as beauty is a modality of 'sensible cognition'.[17]

These views are criticized in the following manner. A. F. Eremeev insists that there is no sensible cognition of the beautiful (à la Baumgarten) which is exclusively pleasurable, which is not shot through with rational elements. He claims that the conception under question deprives aesthetics of its thematic content, makes it asocial and methodologically incapable of going beyond personal predilections.[18] As to the separation of aesthetics and the theory of art, A. I. Burov asserts that the proposed distinction between the two disciplines is basically Kantian in orientation: such theories in fact separate concepts and cognition (the theory of art) from aesthetic judgments.[19] Soviet aestheticians nevertheless grant them a relative autonomy, but they insist that aesthetics studies the general laws of the development of all art and by the same token therefore is in a position to prescribe theoretical principles to art specialists.

> The study of artistic perception and artistic development is possible only in *theoretical* analysis: aesthetics entirely subordinates the historical approach to artistic phenomena and their critical evaluations to its philosophico-theoretical methodology.[20]

Finally, A. Zis', employing contemporary terminology, claims that aesthetics is like a metatheory vis-à-vis the theories of the individual art forms.[21]

M. M. Rozental', P. S. Trofimov, V. V. Vanslov, S. Permjakov, *et al.* represent the view that identifies aesthetics entirely with the theory of art. This was in fact the point of view that lay at the basis of the program for the proposed *Osnovy marksistskoj-leninskoj estetiki*, mirroring the central importance of art in the doctrine of Socialist Realism.

According to Trofimov's and V. F. Berestnev's formulation in 1948,[22] aesthetics is the science of the essence of art, of the relation of art to reality, of the laws of development and the significance and role of art in social life, of the method of artistic creativity. Another view has it that

> Since aesthetics is about the general laws of artistic creativity, that means that it is the philosophical basis of aesthetics; briefly, its role is to be a sort of mediator between philosophy and e.g. the theory of the plastic arts, the theory of literature, etc.[23]

In the beginning what few critics there were merely pointed out the noticeable absence of the concept of beauty in this characterization.[24] But later this criticism was found to be unsatisfactory too, since not only did it complicate matters by introducing yet another concept in need of clarification (beauty), but it in fact begged the essential point – just why should the domain of aesthetics be extended beyond art to include the beautiful as well? Furthermore those authors (Astaxov, Razumnyj, Vercman, Apresjan,[25] the *Kratkij slovar' po estetike* [Short Dictionary of Aesthetics[26]]) who insisted against Trofimov and Co. that aesthetics occupy itself with art *and* the beautiful (be it in nature, society, human life) seemed thereby to be excluding the comic, the tragic, the sublime, etc. from the realm of art; and since they insisted on a single science, anything beyond the beautiful was beyond the purview of the aesthetician. It seemed that little more had been accomplished than a mechanical union of art with beauty, though no one could explain why art ought to be affiliated with the concept of beauty rather than with any other.

Reacting to such views, A. I. Burov, in a book today regarded as a milestone in Soviet aesthetics,[27] pointed to the fundamental problem: no one had yet explained why art, in order to be art, had to have an aesthetic nature and not, say, a cognitive scientific character instead. For example, an article on the tasks of Soviet aestheticians in *Voprosy filosofii* 1955 complained about the lack of attention given to aesthetic categories (the beautiful, the tragic, etc.), but at the same time it reaffirmed that art should not reflect reality aesthetically but truthfully.[28] Burov's remarks brought into the open the need to answer the question: what in general is the aesthetic, be it in art, in nature, society or human life?

(*Ad II*) It can be said that the second group of theories arose in response to Burov's problems. Although these theories have since become the 'classic' doctrine, they were the object of heated and protracted controversy. Before describing them, however, another view which stands, as it were, half way between these and the earlier views should be mentioned first. Its importance lies in its introduction of the expression 'artistic appropriation or assimilation (*osvoenie*) of reality', an expression around which the debate about the philosophical foundations of Soviet aesthetics was eventually to turn.

This view was in fact an ameliorated version of the preceding doctrine, identifying aesthetics with the theory of art. It was formulated by P. S. Trofimov. In its typical formulation it read: "Marxist-Leninist aesthetics is the science of the essence and fundamental laws of man's artistic appropriation of reality".[29] Trofimov explained that by 'artistic appropriation of reality' he meant, first, the cognition of reality that is specific to art (viz. in images which generalize on the basis of individual objects and phenomena) and, second, the active influence of art, on its surrounding world.[30] By stressing the active role of art resp. of artistic creativity, Trofimov appeared to be appeasing critics who insisted on the 'revolutionary-transformative' role of art, although this ringing phrase did not go beyond the requirements of the doctrine of Socialist Realism which stresses the function of art in educating the new Soviet man in the spirit of high Communist ideals. But Trofimov was concerned with more than the Communist education of the working classes. He and others who were sympathetic to this approach were trying to discover the aesthetic side of production of everyday, ordinary objects and not just works of art. In more general terms, they were posing the problem of whether artistic activity gives any clue to the way in which man aesthetically relates to his entire environment. The object of artistic appropriation taken as a whole is not this or that part of reality, ". . . but everything that is interesting for social man, everything stirring people's reasons and emotions, affecting their life and strivings – nature and . . . man, insofar as these can be reproduced without losing their concrete-sensual form of appearance".[31] Art was the most developed form of man's artistic appropriation of reality, because it 'condensed' in itself the entire richness of this process of appropriation. For this reason art was to remain the principle object of aesthetic theory. Aestheticians of this persuasion argued to the following conclusion: artistic practice, creativity, is not only a clue, it is the *sine qua non* of man's aesthetic relation to reality. The world and its phenomena cannot be perceived aesthetically until man has learned aesthetically to relate to the various products of his own creativity.

The aestheticians who came to oppose this view argued basically from a version of the aforementioned argument by Burov, viz., no one had yet explained why art or artistic appropriation has an aesthetic character in the first place. Trofimov and his followers had turned around the basic relation of art and reality. They had neglected to ask the essential question: Did not the identification of artistic activity as in essence an aesthetic activity presuppose a knowledge of the laws of man's aesthetic relation to reality in general? For indeed art possesses an aesthetic essence, claim these writers, but that is because it reflects the aesthetic side or aspect of man's multiple relations to reality. L. N. Stolovič, one of the leading exponents of this view, in criticizing Trofimov *et al.*, says:

> . . . the laws of art can be uncovered and understood in their specificity only on the basis of a knowledge of the general laws of man's aesthetic relation to reality.[32]

This new point of view became the most widely accepted one after c. 1956. So much so that when the *Osnovy marksistskoj leninskoj estetiki* were finally published in 1960, it was this point of view which was represented. According to the *Osnovy*

> aesthetics is a scientific discipline which investigates the general principles of development of man's aesthetic relation to reality and especially of art as a specific form of social consciousness. In other words, aesthetics examines in general the aesthetic relations of man to reality and in particular their highest form, art.[33]

In this formulation the expression 'aesthetic relation' stands in place of 'artistic appropriation', although other authors preferred to speak of 'aesthetic appropriation'. E.g. Ju. B. Borev defines aesthetics as

> a science of the most general principles of the appropriation of reality according to the laws of beauty in people's everyday labor and . . . of the particularities of the artistic-imagistic (*xudožestvenno-obraznogo*) appropriation of the world in art, where the results of man's aesthetic appropriation of the world are consolidated, formed and attain their highest perfection.[34]

In brief, says Borev, "aesthetics [is] the general theory of the appropriation of the world according to the laws of beauty".[35]

Those who adopted the expression 'aesthetic relation' seemed to prefer to remain neutral regarding the question whether in his aesthetic activity in general man affected in some essential respect the reality that was reflected in his art. Those, on the other hand, who chose the expression 'aesthetic appropriation of reality' seemed on the whole to be implying that in some sense or

other man did adapt reality to himself to satisfy his aesthetic needs and that this process and its result were reflected in his art.

Both groups posed and gave answers to the following questions. First, in agreeing that the aesthetic sphere was more extensive than the artistic sphere, they tried to establish the precise extension of the former and to decide whether or not the artistic sphere was subordinate to it. Second, in order to resolve the first issue, both groups were obliged to determine the precise nature of the 'aesthetic': did it involve features of some or all objects and of certain human affairs conceived in mutual independence of one another and if so, which ones, or was its nature to be located in interrelations between the objects of man's activity and man himself and if so, under what conditions, etc.? Third, depending on the nature of the answers given to the preceding problems, both groups provided answers to the questions about the 'specific object' of artistic activity. Although the first question was easily settled, the remaining two, especially the second, became the objects of the most intense controversy in Soviet aesthetics, viz. the controversy between the so-called '*prirodniki*' (literally 'nature – ists') and the '*obščestvenniki*' (societalists).[36]

In the initial stages of the ensuing discussion Soviet aestheticians were hampered by a lack of the proper conceptual tools needed to work out the problems they were confronting in trying to cope with these questions. They were also hampered as we shall see in greater detail in ensuing chapters by certain features of Marxist-Leninist dogma, features which according to their usual formulation could be interpreted as according badly with the new stress on aesthetic activity. Such are, e.g., the Leninist reflection theory of knowledge in dialectical materialism, or one of the basic contentions of historical materialism, that art, namely, is a superstructural phenomenon which is ultimately determined by class factors. On the positive side, however, the discussion marked the first serious considerations of the Marxian theory of labor in Soviet philosophy, even if only in application to aesthetic issues.[37] But the effect of trying to combine standard features of dialectical and historical materialism with as yet untested assertions from such works as Marx's *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 was simply that many of the aforementioned problems were never clearly and adequately formulated.

(*Ad III*) More recent discussions of the object of aesthetics have been primarily attempting to overcome deficiencies in the preceding views. One main problem has been an effort to resolve tensions between what might be called subjectivist and objectivist tendencies in the theory of aesthetic appropriation.[38] The problem can be set out in the following very schematic fashion. The concepts of aesthetic appropriation, resp. relation, quite obviously

call for serious treatment of the subjective features of the total aesthetic situation in which man and reality participate. However, the Marxist-Leninist general philosophical doctrine, especially the reflection theory, correlated with the monism of the philosophical materialism severely limits the role of subjective factors in any relationship between man and the world. As far as aesthetic investigations are concerned this means that there is no room for an 'aesthetic consciousness' or an 'aesthetic object' which are not subject to the laws which govern the motion and development of both the forms of material reality and the forms of consciousness which reflect them. But in order to avoid the conclusion that the aesthetic aspects of human experience were completely independent of experience and only reflected by it, certain Soviet aestheticians argued that it is man's socio-historical practice, having its foundation in "objective, independently existing" social relations which imputes aesthetic significance to objects.[39]

Unfortunately, this solution turned out to be very incomplete if not completely illusory. For it could still be asked what in human activity and its social context makes it possible to identify and isolate aesthetic as opposed to, e.g., moral, utilitarian, politico-ideological, etc., factors. And correspondingly, when confronted with an object that is said to have been somehow affected by social practice, what makes it possible to distinguish aspects referring to aesthetic as opposed to other features of social practice, or to aspects that adhere to the object as such? Time and again Soviet aestheticians were running up against the same or analogous problems: first, the question about the specificity of art (does art have an aesthetic character?) and then the question about the possibility of differentiating an aesthetic activity from other varieties of activity with no other guide than the mass of material objects which historically speaking, have come into contact with and been affected, if not transformed by social practice.[40]

Certain Soviet aestheticians were led to admit that the discussion during the period 1959–1964 had been 'methodologically' unsatisfactory, by which they primarily meant that they had failed to grasp the real nature of the problems they were struggling with.[41] Now certain of them began to realize that, lacking theories of aesthetic consciousness in general and of valuation and evaluation in particular, they would not be able to determine the specific nature of the aesthetic vis-à-vis the other forms of social consciousness and their objects.

Today, the leading tendencies in the definition of the objects of aesthetics are closely correlated. The first is the investigation of the nature and origin of aesthetic values; L. N. Stolovič maintains that the entire discussion about the nature of the aesthetic was in reality a discussion about values.[42] Like Ju.

Borev and M. Kagan,[43] though more in depth than they, Stolovič has been concerned with clarifying the concept of aesthetic appropriation of reality through the concept of value, generally understood by Soviet philosophers as a (dialectical) unity of socially conditioned psychic-emotive states and objective knowledge orienting social practice in a humanly significant direction. Other writers, L. Novikova especially, have been developing a Marxist theory of 'spiritual-practical' activity, i.e. activity which, although growing out of man's basic utilitarian, reproductive relation to reality, comes at a historically determinate moment to precede and orient it thanks to the free play of imagination and the corresponding liberation of consciousness from physical necessity.[44] The two approaches come together in what S. Morawski identifies as a relationist approach to the nature of the aesthetic (as opposed to a subjectivist or objectivist approach). The aesthetic has a valuative, axiological character grounded in the interaction of man and nature on the basis of certain psychophysiological dispositions mediated by and integrated into a net of relatively constant social meanings arising in social practice.[45]

1.3. AESTHETICS AS A SCIENCE

Soviet aestheticians were never preoccupied with metatheoretical issues concerning the character of their discipline and its investigative methods. The traditional fashion had simply been to assert that aesthetics is a scientific discipline, i.e. that it investigates laws (of man's aesthetic activity, of the development of art, etc.) and that it is very closely tied to philosophy because it employs philosophical methods of analysis rather than methods from the 'exact' sciences. Few writers, however, dwelt on these subjects in any detail, preferring normally to repeat tested and approved general formulae. Even the more recent disagreements about, e.g., the object of aesthetics or of the nature of the aesthetic do not seem to have shaken the monolithic unity in spirit and ideas of Soviet aestheticians regarding the scientific character of their discipline. In what follows we shall first assay the reasons why aesthetics is thought of as a scientific discipline and then consider the general manner in which it is related to philosophy. More specific issues concerning philosophical and other methods will be treated in later sections.

Soviet authors speak of aesthetics as a science which is not opposed to philosophy. The usual practice consists of asserting that aesthetics is a science investigating 'laws' or more commonly 'general laws' of whatever it happens to be that a given author or school identifies as the principle object of aesthetics – art or man's aesthetic appropriation of reality in general, etc. Ju. Borev

has put forward one of the few extant definitions of law in aesthetics. According to him, laws in aesthetic theory are "generalizations of objectively existing essential and necessary connections in man's aesthetic activity, adhering immanently to artistic creativity and the process of the development of art".[46] Borev's remark typifies the kinds of difficulties that Soviet aestheticians frequently encounter in dealing with metatheoretical issues. In the first place, Borev confuses a metatheoretical problem concerning the nature of a law in a scientific theory, a problem which depends on extra-aesthetic considerations (e.g. those of general methodology or those following from previous philosophical committments), with questions about the object of aesthetics. It is possible to assert that, e.g., art is the proper domain of aesthetics without, on the other hand, agreeing that the formulation of laws is the proper end of aesthetic inquiry. Even if it were the case that aesthetics did possess a scientific character in the strict sense, differences may still obtain as to the nature of the epistemic foundations of aesthetic laws and theory in general. In the second place, Borev falls victim to the tenacious hold of psychologism over Soviet theoreticians: he confuses the object of aesthetic inquiry, laws, with the cognitive procedure employed in attaining them, generalization. In the long run, therefore, Borev's definition only weakens the standard claim that aesthetics is a science because it studies the definition, the essence, and so the 'general laws', of aesthetic phenomena.[47]

More recently, Soviet aestheticians have taken to speaking of aesthetics as a system of knowledge organizing the results of what is referred to as the complex approach.[48] On this reading, aesthetics as a science is a system of different kinds of laws, categories and general concepts, etc., each sub-group of which governs one of the multiple aspects of the object chosen for scrutiny and refers back to a different particular science engaged in elucidating the particularities of that aspect of the object. It is thus the object itself which is complex, systemic in character, calling forth a series of relatively autonomous but interrelated inquires which taken together constitute a system of scientific knowledge.

P. S. Trofimov mentions two groups of disciplines with which aesthetics is closely allied.[49] The first group, consisting of philosophy, ethics, psychology and pedagogy, shares with aesthetics an interest in man's social essence and the form of its expression in his artistic appropriation of reality. The second group of disciplines is connected with the investigation of art and grows directly out of theoretical problems encountered in studying art. Other writers, depending on what for them is the principal object of aesthetic inquiry, enumerate different combinations of sciences entering into the field of aesthetic

inquiry. L. N. Stolovič [50] and M. S. Kagan,[51] in choosing beauty as the category which best reflects those properties of things and phenomena which are apt to be aesthetically evaluated, suggest that gnoseological, axiological, semiotic, sociological, psychological and pedagogical investigations correspond to the multiple aspects of the category of beauty incorporated in things and phenomena. Theorists [52] who are interested in the origins and functions of aesthetic activity in the context of socio-practical activity as such call upon biology, sociology, psychology and the general theory of art – which includes different disciplines – to organize fields of research directly or indirectly related to aesthetic issues, e.g. the psychophysiology of aesthetic perception and creativity, two areas that today are receiving widespread attention in Soviet aesthetics.[53] Those who concentrate on art and attached phenomena point out its 'polyfunctionality' and 'multisignificance' as premisses for a complex, systems-theory approach, drawing not only on sciences growing directly out of problems related to art, but also on history and philosophy, sociology and economy, semiotics and mathematics.[54]

All authors of this persuasion agree that aesthetics is not just a summary of the results of the other more specific sciences studying aspects of the object of aesthetics from their respective points of view. As a general principle they claim that aesthetics preserves a unique character and task. This claim is usually justified by arguing that in calling other scientific disciplines with their specific methods to its side, aesthetic inquiry reforges their concepts, categories, etc. into properly aesthetic notions, such that they come to have a significance and function that does not adhere to them outside of this context. In the worlds of L. N. Stolovič, "aesthetics is a science finding itself at the crossroads of diverse branches of knowledge and developing them in a way favorable to aesthetics . . .".[55]

1.31. Aesthetics and Marxist-Leninist Philosophy

Today Soviet aestheticians generally agree that aesthetics is not merely a part, a branch of general philosophical knowledge. In looking at Soviet claims in this regard it is important to distinguish what is said and what has actually been the case in aesthetic inquiries. Soviet Marxist aesthetics has since its beginnings been characterized by a series of constant features, features which receive their original formulation and explanation in dialectical and historical materialism. These constants pertain not only to the content and general assumptions, but also to the method and very style of Soviet aesthetics. Certain Soviet aestheticians have acknowledged the nefarious consequences of an overly close relationship between aesthetics and philosophy: the former can

cease to have any autonomous value, becoming merely a vehicle for general philosophical ideas. This situation has been described by the term 'illustrationism': some general philosophical position from dialectical or historical materialism is illustrated with examples from art, completely apart from the question whether the concepts do or do not have any aesthetic significance.[56]

In quite general terms, the following positions from Marxist-Leninist philosophy reoccur constantly in texts devoted to aesthetic questions. From dialectical materialism, first of all, Soviet aesthetic theory takes its general materialist orientation. Like philosophy, so aesthetics too is confronted with a Great Basic Question. In its aesthetic version Engels' problem concerns the relation of art to reality, not in the sense of questioning the existence of the relation, but in choosing between material reality or an extra-material heaven of ideas, of spirit, etc., as the source and foundation of art's content.[57] In a similar fashion, where art is concerned Soviet aesthetics is distinguished from aesthetic theories extolling the artist's passive contemplation of a static real or ideal world; it supports the theory according to which the artist must be actively engaged in discerning the contradictory elements in a dynamic, constantly changing reality.[58] Soviet accounts of the history of aesthetic doctrines faithfully follow this model borrowed from philosophy. Depending on their positions on these matters aestheticians and artists have been classified as either subjective or objective idealists, mechanistic or dialectical materialists, and so forth.

Materialistic monism has the consequence that there can be no aesthetic phenomena or experiences thereof which are not governed by the same laws which hold for the entire universe of matter in its diverse forms. The theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism gives a further basis to this consequence by insisting that art is a reflection of material reality. Indeed this view was strengthened by the adoption of V. Belinskij's interpretation of Hegel that artistic creativity was nothing more, nothing less than thinking in images instead of concepts, which were the lot of science and philosophy.[59] In keeping with the traditional scientism and essentialism of Soviet philosophy, the stress on the cognitive function of art virtually eliminated from consideration any other than social factors conditioning subjectivity in artistic creation.

But it is the ubiquitous presence of the dialectic that bears particular witness to the relationship of aesthetics and philosophy. Holding a general theory of the structure and development of all regions of material reality, Soviet aestheticians are *a priori* committed to discovering dialectically connected phenomena in their inquiries.[60] This commitment takes several forms. One is to carry over the categories of the materialist dialectic and the laws governing

their interconnections to aesthetics, attaching the codicil, however, that in aesthetic theory they obtain a specific aesthetic function and significance. The classic example here is the conceptual pair 'content-form' which for a long time represented the only tool applied by Soviet aestheticians to the analysis of all types of art works. Another approach is to try to discover contrarily related phenomena in every investigation. Thus in analyzing the so-called aesthetic categories, groupings of concepts such as the following are, it seems mandatory: beautiful-ugly, tragic-comic, sublime-base, harmonious-chaotic, etc.[61] M. S. Kagan, a prime exponent of such a dialectical aesthetics, speaks of the artistic appropriation of reality as a dialectical grouping of material and spiritual, rational and irrational, ordered and unordered, discovered and created, constant and variable, objective and subjective factors.[62] The elements of each pair are said to have a contradictory relationship to one another. We shall return to the dialectic as a method of analysis in the following section.

Where historical materialism is concerned the situation is very similar. The Marxist socio-economic theory stipulates that art is one of the forms of social consciousness, i.e. a superstructure or ideology. It is immediately clear, therefore, that, according to the basic maxim of historical materialism (– that social being determines social consciousness –) aesthetic consciousness, the aesthetic sense, should be investigated from the point of view of its class and ideological affiliations and finally the manner of its determination by the mode of production. By the same token, since all dominant forms of the social consciousness in a given socio-economic formation are determined by the same factors, they not only possess common features, but they mutually modify each other.[63] For this reason, Soviet aestheticians engage in frequent discussions which are to unravel, e.g., the concordance of aesthetic, political, ethico-moral, religious, philosophical, etc. elements in art. Books and articles bearing titles like 'The Beauty of Freedom and Freedom in Beauty from the Enlightenment to Hegel',[64] 'The Aesthetic Significance of the Ideals of Utopian Socialism',[65] appear at regular intervals. In another application of the principles of historical materialism to aesthetic matters, art is studied in terms of the 'laws' of its development just as socio-economic formations are studied in terms of their laws of evolution and decay. Social and artistic development are juxtaposed, since, as a form of the social consciousness, aesthetic consciousness 'reflects' both the evolution and decay of a social formation. Finally, the principles of historical materialism have a meta-theoretical significance since they explain the origin of aesthetics itself. According to the *Osnovy marksistskoj-leninskoj filosofii* aesthetics as an independent discipline

came about in class society for the first time only after the division of labor which made possible the appearance of art as an activity independent of physical, necessary labor.[66]

In spite of the undeniable presence of these and other philosophical constants in the formulation of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic problematic, Soviet aestheticians insist that their discipline is autonomous, possessing its own specific object and tasks. The discussion of this point takes several forms. In the first place, a universal reaction exists today against certain early views outrightly identifying the object of aesthetics and the object of philosophy. The following text represents an opinion which is rejected today. "Aesthetics is a part of philosophy, a philosophical discipline, hence the definition of the object of the history of philosophy must be placed at the basis of the definition of its object".[67] Other writers had called on the authority of A. Ždanov in support of this view. Ždanov had reminded writers and artists that the development of realism in art paralleled the ineluctable growth and spread of philosophical materialism, both of which are supported on the invincible foundations of the reflection theory, the sole correct theory of cognition in any sphere of human interest, including art. However, after the renaissance of aesthetic discussions in the middle and late fifties, it became commonplace to assert that the object of aesthetics was not identical with the object of the history of philosophy. Aesthetics does not double philosophy, it begins its inquiries where philosophy leaves off.[68] Statements such as these were rarely if ever accompanied by convincing explanations. More recently, however, several explanations of this autonomy have been proposed. One of these concerns the very object of aesthetics. According to A. G. Egorov, the days when aestheticians could still treat aesthetics exclusively as a philosophical discipline or a general theory of art, taking its theoretical foundations from philosophy, have gone. Due largely to the successes of the natural, technical and social sciences, to the so-called scientific-technological revolution, every aspect of human productivity has come to have some kind of aesthetic significance and function. In short, the realm of aesthetic inquiry has grown considerably beyond the speculative concerns of philosophers; it now stands in close touch with the positive sciences which employ empirical or formal methods of analysis to study the various sides of human activity.[69] Another argument has it that philosophy itself is no longer the universal science it used to be, containing, among other things, aesthetic speculations. According to A. Zis', Marxist-Leninist philosophy limits genuine philosophical knowledge to the theory of knowledge, dialectics, logic and the methodology of science. Hence, *a fortiori* aesthetics cannot be a part of philosophy.[70] Like Zis', N.

Volkova and L. Novikova do not deny that originally the object of aesthetic inquiry was defined and delineated purely philosophically, that aesthetics received its categorial scheme, its system of values from philosophy and that the continuing reliance of aestheticians on abstract theoretical thinking is proof of its debt to philosophy. Nevertheless, Volkova and Novikova affirm that aesthetics separated itself out of the general system of philosophical knowledge and became an independent conceptual scientific system.[71]

For all their insistence on the autonomy of aesthetics vis-à-vis philosophy, Soviet aestheticians still maintain that aesthetics is a philosophical discipline. In the first place, aesthetics like philosophy has a synthetic role in relation to other sciences.[72] While philosophy synthesizes the achievements of all sciences without exception, aesthetics takes on this function only with certain disciplines cooperating in aesthetic inquiries. But, as in general philosophy, this means, on the one hand, that it owes its existence to the materials that they furnish for its scrutiny and, on the other hand, that it provides the conceptual framework by means of which these disciplines are able to orient their investigations in a determinate direction and ascribe new meaning to their own concepts and categories. For example, the aesthetic concept 'artistic image' furnishes to the particular theories of the individual arts and art criticism a criterion for their descriptive and evaluative tasks. In the second place, these theoretical principles and concepts of aesthetics possess a universal character, thanks to which they cut across the multiple regions of human activity and interest, supplying criteria of aesthetic evaluation to all of them. The universal character of aesthetic concepts is evident in such key concepts as the 'aesthetic'. In using this concept reference is made to the fundamental, all-encompassing characteristic manifesting itself without exception in every phenomenon entering into the aesthetic universe of discourse.[73] This concern for what is basic engenders, just like in philosophy, questions pertaining to the essence, nature, origin and significance of aesthetic phenomena, which questions are satisfactorily answered only in terms of general theoretico-philosophical concepts leading to the formulation of laws, etc.[74] In short, aesthetics is a philosophical discipline because it shares the methodological aspirations of general philosophy. In this connection aesthetics is a philosophical discipline because its own methodological directives come from dialectical and historical materialism.

1.32. Aesthetics and Methodology

In spite of their differences on other matters, Soviet aestheticians adhere to the view that dialectical and historical materialism together constitute the

general methodological foundations of aesthetics. I. Astaxov writes that "Soviet aesthetics received the name of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics for the reason that, in studying its object, it supports itself on the scientific method discovered and worked out in Marxist-Leninist philosophy".[75] According to P. S. Trofimov,

> Marxist-Leninist aesthetics is connected with Marxist-Leninist philosophy in such a way that the latter is a methodology for the former. All the fundamental traits and particularities of the Marxist dialectical method are fully applicable to the investigations of aesthetic problems . . . .[76]

In fact, what in the foregoing section were referred to as the constant features of Soviet aesthetics, viz. various positions from dialectical and historical materialism, are precisely said to be the underlying principles of this general methodology.

Upon reflection there is nothing surprising about this state of affairs since it is but an application to aesthetics of the standard Marxist-Leninist doctrine concerning the universal methodological import of dialectical materialism for all sciences.[77] According to this doctrine, only that method is truly scientific which faithfully reflects the objective laws of the world, which is entirely determined by the object under consideration, by the laws of its development, by its essence reflected in consciousness.[78] Because dialectical materialism gives theoretical expression to the most general laws of the structure and development of the material universe, it not only supplies a general conceptual scheme to the particular sciences: it is also, for this reason, according to definition, the most general methodology.

In application to aesthetics, the general methodology of dialectical materialism must be concretized in the specific object of aesthetics. Even though there are disputes as to the latter point, Soviet aestheticians, in agreement with Marx and Engels, locate the origin and significance of that which is aesthetic, of art in particular, in the realm of social consciousness. Consequently, it comes under the direct purview of historical materialism, i.e. under the specific laws governing the social form of the structure and development of matter. It is in turn left to aesthetics to elaborate the aesthetic specificity of the social structure of matter investigated in all of its forms by historical materialism within the framework provided by dialectical materialism. Here Soviet aestheticians insist that the general methodological-philosophical principles are not mechanically applied to the specific object of aesthetics from the outside. Rather, these are supposed to be organically unified with this object, they grow out of it and articulate its various features in their multiple

interconnections with other objects, etc.[79] For example, art cannot be understood as a specific form of social consciousness without studying the way in which the dialectic of the universal and the particular is concretized in it. Or again, the essence of art is dialectically contradictory because it involves the unity of creative, transformative elements with cognitive, reflective elements. In general, aesthetic questions cannot be adequately dealt with unless the dialectic of the subjective and the objective is concretized in a specific way in the object of aesthetics.[80] And so forth.

Soviet aestheticians do not usually go beyond statements like the preceding when speaking about the general philosophical methodology of aesthetics. About the most that is added at this level of the discussion is that certain philosophico-methodological problems must be resolved first in order to provide the foundation for the collaboration of more concrete sciences in aesthetic inquiry.[81] In this way, however, the discussion is today increasingly transferred to the comparatively more precise and elaborate methodologies of the auxiliary disciplines in their application to aesthetic questions. As a result, the general methodology of aesthetics has been left at the level of generalities, being little more in most cases than an expression of fidelity and adherence to the Marxist-Leninist world view.

Whether or not methodological directives can indeed be extracted from dialectical and historical materialism, some observations pertaining to the application of a philosophical methodology in aesthetics are pertinent here. Soviet aestheticians do not seem to betray any awareness that in relying upon dialectical materialism as a general methodology they are engaging in what S. Morawski calls an 'all or nothing' operation.[82] It is the property of any method extracted from a 'maximalistic' philosophy like dialectical materialism to be self-confirming. Being a philosophical theory with a universal extension, no phenomenon can falsify the theory; hence the method extracted from it will always prove itself in application to any instance.[83] Moreover, in application to aesthetic phenomena, such a philosophical method insists that it alone can correctly and adequately identify and isolate for examination phenomena of an aesthetic sort. If, e.g., historical materialism maintains that the class struggle is the sole basis for explaining the history of culture, there can be no question that aesthetic phenomena can be correctly and adequately identified and explained except by reference to the class struggle.[84] Without the theory there is no way of knowing where to look for the thing; but in the case of maximalistic doctrines like dialectical and historical materialism the method seems to be able to find no more than what the theory already knows to be the case anyway.

1.321. *A periodization of the dominant approaches to aesthetics.* A more complete picture of method presents itself, however, when a closer look is taken at the history of Soviet aesthetic thought. Although it remains true that Soviet aestheticians were never more than dimly aware of the importance and nature of methodological considerations, several periods can nevertheless be distinguished solely on the basis of the dominant approach to aesthetic questions prevailing at different moments. Indeed, when they look at the history of their efforts at all, Soviet aestheticians frequently criticize it from this angle.[85] A global view of the entire period since 1917 reveals that the methodological problematic has been identical with the variations in the stress put on the central importance of one or more key positions of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine as a whole. In general, there exist in the heritage of Marxist-Leninist philosophy several distinct possibilities for the development of methodological directives in the 'human' sciences. In chronological order:

(1) the work of the young Marx, stressing the creative, humanizing role of social practice, of labor, opens the door to considerations about, e.g., the genesis of aesthetic consciousness as a differentiation of human labor.

(2) On the other hand, the explanatory possibilities of Marx's 'materialist conception of history', as summarized in the famous *preface* to the *Critique of Political Economy*, appear to be of a different character. Here the laws of class struggle and revolution explain not so much the emergence but the social function of ideologies, i.e. forms of social consciousness in a class society, among them – art. This method is most commonly identified as the typical Marxist analysis.

(3) Then again, the 'logic of *Capital*' and especially the methodological remarks in the *Grundrisse* seem to offer still another methodological possibility. According to certain interpretations,[86] Marx here proposes a genetico-structural approach, according to which a given phenomenon should be conceived as relatively autonomous but shaped by antecedent factors which are embodied in it in a qualitatively distinct form. In other words, the question why did something come to be cannot be separated from the question from what did it come and these two in turn must be treated from the perspective of the actual structure. The specificity, the peculiarity of the phenomenon is never reduced to the antecedent factors which have undergone a transformation in the very emergence of the phenomenon under scrutiny.

(4) Finally, the Soviet contribution to the list of possibilities is primarily the integration of the Engelsian-Leninist theory of knowledge into the context of the second possibility described.

Whatever the intrinsic complementarities of these methodological possibil-

ities might be need not occupy us further at this moment. The history of Soviet aesthetic thought has been marked by choices of one or another of these approaches, although since they all have a claim to be called 'Marxist', the most recent tendency among Soviet aestheticians has been to try to combine them. Generally speaking, four major periods can be discerned. In the first aestheticians undertook the application of the second of the possibilities described above, although the manner of its interpretation eventually earned for it the epithet 'vulgar sociologism'. In the second period the fourth model prevailed, although once again Soviet aestheticians eventually objected to its interpretation, labelling it 'vulgar gnoseologism'. After 1956, the discussion became more diffuse, the old currents dying out slowly and the new frequently having to struggle for a hearing. This was the period, however, when the early philosophy of Karl Marx was brought to light, even though as far as aesthetic discussions were concerned no clear methodological directives were formulated on its basis. Genetic considerations were stressed to the detriment of structural analyses which continued to be carried on in the spirit of the reflection theory. Finally, the most recent discussions have been very diverse in approach, employing not only philosophical tools, but also the methods of the 'exact' sciences.

The following account does not pretend to be exhaustive in the formulation of the tendencies dominating any given period of the Soviet aesthetic discussion.

1.322. *'Vulgar' or extreme sociologism*. The first avowedly Marxist approach to aesthetics before and after the Revolution was sociological in character. The reasons for this eruption of sociological aesthetics seem, in the first place, to be of an extrinsic nature, referring to ideological and political factors. Soviet historians of the period usually maintain that, as far as aesthetic matters went, the problem was that of the relationship of 'art and the revolution'.[87] Theoretically, the revolution had brought into being the dictatorship of the proletariat, defined as a transitional period in which the victorious working class would extirpate all reactionary, counter-revolutionary class forces in all domains of social and political life. In order to carry out this task everything would have to be judged from the class point of view: an individual's social extraction determined his class position and the latter in turn weighed heavily in the evaluation of the products of his activity. Given the very sense and purpose of the revolution, moreover, proletarian contributions to the political, economic and cultural sectors of social life were judged in a much more favorable light than those left by the bourgeoisie. In regard to cultural matters, art

in particular, the advocates of a proletarian culture, as distinct from and superior to anything produced by earlier social formations, insisted on examining art and artists from the perspective of their class and its corresponding ideology.[88] In this way the door was opened to a socio-ideological approach to questions in any way connected with art.

Adherents of the Proletkult were strengthened in their convictions by the writings of G. V. Plekhanov, who had for the first time applied Marx's and Engels' materialist conception of history to questions of art and aesthetics.[89] Furthermore Lenin's initial reticence to enter into the polemics that began to rage shortly after the revolution, slowed down the dissemination of his own views which, without minimizing the social position of an artist, accentuated the cognitive function of art.[90] Finally, Soviet historians today claim that Marxists went to extremes at that time in order to combat the extremes of formalism and narrow psychologistic doctrines, which totally denied the influence of social factors on artistic creativity.[91]

Although representatives[92] of this approach did not agree on all points, the general features of the sociological method are the following. In the first place, sociological investigations in aesthetics did not only have a methodological significance; they also constituted an autonomous discipline: the sociology of art was normally equated with aesthetics at this time. As a discipline, the sociology of art dealt with one fundamental problem: the 'dialectical unity' of the specific lawfulness of art and its social determination.[93] Methodologically, however, the dialectical unity meant less than the reductive operation found already at the level of the formulation of the problem: art could have no other determining factor but the social one. The reduction consisted of a crude application of the basic truth of historical materialism, that social being determines social consciousness, to artistic creativity.

A. Economic determinism. Like all other forms of social consciousness art contains no mysteries that could not be explained by reference solely to the production process and its corresponding mode of exchange. Conversely, all laws of artistic creativity could be derived exclusively from the laws of productivity.

Art is causally conditioned by the socio-economic process. Not only are the entire diversity of social life and its corresponding forms of consciousness reduced to the production process, but, what is more, man in all the forms of his self-expression is a product of economic necessity. For the investigator of art the only tasks are to study the way in which social being, 'existence' (*bytie*) is embodied in particular works of art and the way in which the artist is conditioned by one form or another of this social being.[94] Anything that

takes the investigation of art beyond its relation to the production process (e.g. the enjoyment of beauty, the evaluation of social ideals embodied in art, etc.) is anti-Marxist and unscientific. Search not for an idea, a world view, etc. embodied in the work of art, but for the existence (*bytie*), i.e. the socio-economic process which determines people's lives, their consciousness and poetic creativity.[95]

B. Functional geneticism. In proclaiming the absolute dependence of art on the social process, writers like V. Friče and V. Pereverzev considered that the genesis of a work of art, of a style, etc. reflected the genesis and transformation of the social formation, the class. By the same token, the work or style, etc., took on a certain function reflecting the position of the social group to which it owed its existence in the socio-productive process. Thus, for example a 'realistic' style of art reflects the irreligious, rationalist world view of a progressive class. Works of art produced during this period of the history of a class possess a rational, utilitarian function, reflecting its revolutionary economic and political role. On the contrary, however, a symbolic style is representative of the irrational, religious world view of a reactionnary class, a class having passed the apogee of its social dynamism. Accordingly, the corresponding art form has a hedonistic function, obscuring thereby the real decadence of that class' social role. V. Friče, the chief advocate of this view, interpreted the history of art with this model.[96] The empirically verifiable repetitiveness of styles and types of art is called forth, he felt, by the recurrence of socio-economic circumstances. For example, the art of Greece in the sixth to the fifth centuries before Christ, of Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello), and of France in the eighteenth century (David) was of the same type, because the general situation of the respective social formations was analogous from case to case. In short, all of the functions of art were reduced to a single one: to be a tool in the struggle for the perpetuation of the existence of some class with its determinate socio-economic position.[97]

C. Ideologism. The brunt, however, of sociological aesthetics fell on the analysis of the specific way in which external ideological factors shape artistic creativity and the contents of works of art. According to the 'vulgar' sociologists, the socio-economic process is 'spiritually refracted' in a 'psycho-ideology', i.e. the determinate frame of mind characteristic of a given class and depending on the position that class occupies in the production process.[98] In art this psycho-ideology is embodied in the 'artistic image', equivalent to the concrete depiction of social reality by the artist. A double dependency was at work in the artistic process: the dependency of the significance of the concrete image

on a particular psycho-ideology, the manner in which the image reflected the interests of a class, and the dependency of the artist on the class point of view. The artist of a class was necessarily an exponent of its collective frame of mind, which, in its turn, was but an open or veiled expression of its position in the production cycle. The consciousness of the artist was not granted an autonomy and no contradiction could exist between his class position and the thematic orientation of his work. The sociologists virtually identified the work of art with the artist, the artist with the social milieu, social consciousness, and the latter with ideology, conceived very narrowly as the expression of class interest.[99] Consequently, art had no particular cognitive function, it was neither true nor false; it was only a tool in the class struggle serving to perpetuate the ideas of one class or another. In keeping with the critique of ideologies formulated by Marx in the *German Ideology*, one of the tasks of the sociologist of art was to unveil a deformed, mystified social consciousness in works of art produced in class societies.[101]

D. Relativism. The inevitable consequence of the sociological aesthetics of the twenties was a thoroughgoing relativism. There was no question that an artist and his work could break out of the confines of his class ideology.[102] This was not merely a reiteration of the social determination of art, it was a flat rejection of the possibility that the artist could objectively cognize (social) reality at all. The artist could only 'mechanically' reflect that social reality which conditioned the farthest reaches of his consciousness. The artist as the bearer of the collective psychology gave expression to it, it spoke through him in the artistic image. To the extent that the social dynamism of his class was subject to the laws of the socio-economic process as a whole, the value of his art was identical to the progressive or reactionary orientation of his class. In the extreme application of the sociological approach to aesthetics, the entire content of the art of past social formations could be judged as worthless from the point of view of the progressive proletarian class. In its turn, the proletarian culture would have to be of a wholly new kind, reflecting the original quality of its class and thereby eliminating any continuity with the tradition.

Criticisms of vulgar sociology developed gradually and today Soviet aestheticians unanimously and vociferously decry its excesses, although their specific criticisms do not usually go beyond platitudes regarding the proper interpretation of the classics. Vulgar sociology was, according to the standard critique, an extreme case of 'illustrationism', applying without further ado the socio-economic theses of Marxism to specific problems in art. In this sense it betrayed a primitive understanding of Marxism. In his frequently cited

letters on historical materialism Engels offered a detailed discussion of the relationship holding between the basis and superstructure.

> Political, juridical philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc. development is based on economic development. But all these react on each other and also on the economic base. It is not because the economic situation is the *cause*, solely *active* while everything is only a passive effect. There is, rather, interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself.[103]

This and other remarks by Engels in the same letters are taken to mean that there exists a series of intermediary factors between a given superstructure and its corresponding economic base, as a consequence of which the superstructure can develop not only more or less autonomously but even lag behind the base (e.g. Marx's often repeated observations about the curious position of Greek art in contemporary civilization). Not only are there intermediary forms between ideologies and the base, there are equally complex and mediated connections between the artist and society, between the social psychology and the personal psychological make-up of the artist. Art represents a peculiar synthesis of these elements, the result of conscious choices by an artist to incorporate these and not other elements of class consciousness. Indeed that the artist is not bound to reproduce the psycho-ideology of his class mechanically is starkly evident thanks to the works of Balzac, the Russian revolutionary democrats, Tolstoy *et al.*, who were able to criticize the contradictions of their classes and societies piercingly. Relying on such examples, Soviet aestheticians insist that it is clear that art does have a cognitive function, that it can truly and profoundly illuminate the contradictions of (social) reality. Together with these points of criticism Soviet writers have been concerned to dispel the conviction that the sociology of art is equivalent to Marxist-Leninist aesthetics as a whole. A closer look at the doctrines of the twenties reveals an essential contradiction: they are not able to explain the specificity of art.

> By ... admitting that the specificity of art can be determined only with the help of externally introduced 'non-sociological' categories, the representatives of [vulgar sociologism] affirm the non-correspondence of the object of the sociology of art with the real specificity of art, and consequently the falseness of the substitution of the sociology of art for aesthetics as a whole.[104]

1.323. *Vulgar or extreme gnoseologism.* In comparison with the preceding period historical work on the aesthetics of the thirties, forties and early fifties is barely developed. There is enough information, however, to understand why this is the case. In the first place, the 'cult of the personality' had a singularly deleterious effect on the state of aesthetic theory during this period.

Stalin's onslaught against the multiple, conflicting literary and artistic associations of the twenties led to the condemnation of the doctrines or theories associated with them, including sociological aesthetics. In the second place, the advent of the doctrine of Socialist Realism concentrated the attention of aestheticians on a narrow range of questions connected almost exclusively with literature and its function in socialist society. Furthermore, extensive official praise for Gorkij and attribution of central importance to certain texts by Engels [106] and Lenin [107] brought the category of realism to the fore, which "... led to the absolutization of the cognitive principles of art, to a representation of realism as an extra-historical, eternal quality of art".[108] By the post-war years, aesthetic theory had become firmly ensconced in 'literaturocentrism', 'realismocentrism', and 'gnoseologism',[109] languishing – in the opinion of Soviet commentators – in 'dogmatism' and 'scholasticism'. It was, in short, a thoroughly regressive period.

Initially, in the late twenties and early thirties, attempts had been made to overcome the extreme one-sidedness of 'vulgar sociologism'. In particular the question of the tradition, of continuity in art, had to be dealt with in a more positive way. By introducing the concept of 'peopleness' (*narodnost'*) next to 'classness' (*klassovost'*) and the concept of 'truthfulness' (*istinnost'*) next to that 'ideologization' of (*ideologičnost'*),[110] aestheticians hoped to overcome the narrow class relativism of sociological aesthetics. Every authentic work of art embodied an all-human sense and significance, even if this extra-class factor could be expressed only from the artist's class point of view. Later, however, the requirement to consider the method and content of the art of Socialist Realism as the most advanced and faithful portrayal of this all-human social significance of art led to the virtual identification of artistic progress, realism and truthfulness as aesthetic categories.[111] In the forties and early fifties attention was turned almost entirely to extolling the cognitive merits of socialist art, a situation which led to the formulation of the doctrine known today as 'vulgar gnoseologism'.

Repeated tirelessly in codified form, the basic contentions of 'vulgar gnoseologism' were the following.[112] First, art, like science, is a reflection of reality; art and science have the same goal and object: the cognition of reality. Art does not have a specific domain of reality to reflect; like science it is concerned with the whole world and all things and phenomena in it. In the second place, art, like science, objectively and completely reproduces the essence, content, qualities and properties of reality. But if art has no other function beside the cognitional one, how is it distinguished from science, which has no other function than to cognize reality objectively? Advocates

of the gnoseological approach answered this question in the following way. Whereas science grasps the features of reality in concepts and laws, art articulates them in 'images'. In other words, not the content of art distinguishes it from science, but the manner, the form in which it expresses and articulates this content. To 'think artistically' is, in fact, to incorporate the scientific cognition of reality into 'images'; the artist embodies ideas abstracted from reality into material, sensible-concrete, forms. Therefore, an artistic image is the unity of a concrete sensible form, the external manifestation of art, with the essential, 'typical' traits of the phenomenon depicted by the artist.

This doctrine was an amalgamation of V. Belinskij's interpretation of Hegel's view that art was an immediate, intuitive expression of a spiritual ideal in an exterior, material form;[113] of Engels' opinion that realism implies "the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances";[114] and, finally, of Lenin's reflection theory, stressing not simply the faithful reproduction of an exterior, independent reality, but the procedural order of the cognitional process itself: beginning in sensations, passing to abstract concepts in 'thinking' and 'generalization' and returning to 'practice'[115] (a process also at work in the formation of 'artistic images'). Criticism of the doctrine pertains to the supposedly crude interpretations of Belinskij and Lenin. An artist did not simply passively reflect an object in a mirror-like reflection; he was also creative, in his activity he exerted a transformative influence on reality. Recourse to thinking in images did not solve anything either since it could be easily shown that science employed images too without attributing any aesthetic significance to them.[116] Science could explain why the images it employed were illustrative, auxiliary, non-expressive and typifications. The 'vulgar gnoseologists' only asserted but did not explain just why artistic images were illustrative, expressive and transformative of man's social consciousness, why, thanks to them, artists were supposed to be 'engineers of human souls'.

1.324 *'Academism', 'Empiricism' and 'Historism'.* The critique of the two preceding methods concerned their failure to deal with what is specifically aesthetic in art. In their own way, neither had done more than illustrate philosophical truths of Marxist theory with examples arbitrarily chosen from the domain of art or, as in the case of the art of Socialist Realism, constructed to satisfy the requirements of the theory. Soviet aestheticians still found themselves unable to say just what the object of their discipline was. Consequently, the period beginning after 1956 and continuing into the early sixties was marked by a protracted struggle to establish the specific object of

aesthetics, to determine what the nature of the 'aesthetic' in general was.[117] Considerations about art became secondary in importance to problems of aesthetic categories and the genesis of the aesthetic 'sense'. In this atmosphere of a search for foundations, methodological considerations were not given any prominence, or, more exactly, very few bothered to distinguish them from the theories elaborated to deal with the central questions. Looking back at the period in question, Soviet aestheticians bemoan its lack of a methodological orientation, speaking of the extant theories as being speculative in character.[118]

During the period in question polemics had raged between factions which, when methodology was at stake, alternately branded one another with the epithets 'academism' or 'scholasticism' and 'empiricism', depending on how the unity of (aesthetic) theory and (artistic) practice was conceived.[119]

What was criticized as unmitigated empiricism in aesthetics consisted of extensive quotations from the works of writers since it was felt that it was virtually impossible to translate into the language of concepts the immediate, emotionally charged impressions that a given work of art called forth. One critic remarked sarcastically that it was a fine thing that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* did not fall into the hands of such aestheticians! Extensive quotation was followed by 'analysis' of which the following is an example.

> What, if not the ethical position of the artist-humanist, the great lover of humanity, can explain the fact that this frightening tale (the reference is to Gorkij's 'Devočka') does not quell, dishearten, but, on the contrary, incites an active indignation at the vile world of force and the violation of the human person and spiritually instigates a struggle with all of its manifestations.[120]

The opposite tendency, 'academicism', or 'scholasticism' was expressed in the following statement:

> . . . only a *theoretical* consideration of the beautiful (as well as other general aesthetic categories), the system of logical 'inferences', provide results. An absolutization of the 'critical' analysis of particular facts as the universal method of aesthetic investigation turns out in fact to be the most stupid form of empiricism, and, what is more, a turning away from aesthetics as the methodological foundation of artistic criticism.[121]

But behind the polemics raging from the late fifties over the nature of the aesthetic and the object of aesthetics was one philosophical method whose contours were frequently not clear even to its proponents. Those who maintained that the aesthetic was socio-human in origin supported their case on Marx's early views on labor. They supposed that a fundamental 'methodological' directive extracted out of this doctrine would be to consider the origin

of aesthetic qualities, properties in things and arts as reflecting the gradual liberation of human labor from physical necessity and its transformation into creative activity. Curiously, however, in a book of one of the leading exponents of this theory of Marx, L. N. Stolovič, the chapter on method contained vague observations about induction, deduction and 'analysis', and did not betray the least awareness that the preceding chapters on the object of aesthetics had conceived that object almost exclusively from the *genetic* angle.[122] The only exception at this time to this 'methodological blindness' seems to be found in the writings of Ju. B. Borev,[123] who repeatedly called attention to the principle of 'historism' (*istorizm*),[124] as the method employed by the 'classics' of Marxism-Leninism in their works. According to Borev, only a historist methodology is able to overcome the dichotomy between a theoretical, speculative investigation and a merely critical, empirical analysis of facts. Historist methodology involves the observance of three important conditions:

> firstly, it is a consideration of phenomena in their development; secondly, it shows the connections of a given phenomenon with others and, finally, it studies history in the light of contemporary experience, employing historically higher forms as a key to understanding historically lower ones.[125]

Borev's remarks never became more than declarations of purpose. Not only did he not explicitly concretize the purported historist methodology in aesthetic questions, he even failed to justify his assertion that it had in fact been the methodology of the 'classics'. A passing reference to Engels' remark, that the logical is the historical cleansed of accidents and impurities, seemed to imply that he had in mind a combination of structural and genetic analyses. However, his constant references to the materialist dialectic seem to indicate that his conception of historism did not at this point go beyond a paraphrase of general principles of the former.[126]

1.325. *Methodological pluralism.* In comparison with the preceding periods, the most recent stages of the methodological discussion in aesthetics have been characterized by a proliferation of heterogeneous approaches which, if they testify to the growing awareness by the Soviets of the complexity of the aesthetic problematic, nevertheless occasionally obscure its unity by eclecticism. Nominally, the new interest in method could be interpreted, as some Soviet authors seem to suggest, as a break with the prevailing speculative, philosophical orientations of yesteryear. Having reached no firm solutions in the controversy over the nature of the object of aesthetics, participants in the discussion attributed their lack of success to the poor quality of their

investigative tools. But in many cases the search for exactitude became an end in itself while the resolution of the philosophical difficulties involved in settling the issue of the proper object of aesthetics receded into the background.

Until recently, this lack of a unified perspective on the nature of the object of aesthetics was responsible for the division among aestheticians between those favoring a 'traditional', 'descriptive, psychological' approach and those supporting the development of exact, scientific approaches. Adherents of the latter point of view devote most of their attention to art understood in the wide sense as a series of interacting heterogeneous factors (e.g. art as the crystallization of a certain communicative system), while the more traditionally minded aestheticians are also or even primarily concerned with extra-artistic, anthropological-epistemological, axiological questions about aesthetic categories in general and man's aesthetic appropriation of reality. More and more writers, however, are making a concerted effort to unite both currents, relying on certain truths of dialectical and historical materialism to help them work out a conceptual schema which would justify the inclusion of exact methods in the otherwise philosophically delineated domain of aesthetic inquiry.[127]

The assimilation by Soviet aestheticians of exact methods into aesthetic research has been a controversial subject not only with respect to the justification for their introduction but also with respect to their interpretation in relation to aesthetics. According to M. S. Kagan [128] and A. A. Farbštejn [129], proponents of the traditional, descriptive approaches had refused to acknowledge the value of exact methods because they felt that artistic material cannot be confined within the models of exact methods. For the traditionally minded, aesthetic analysis pertains to individual works of art, requiring therefore an intuitive, interpretative understanding. On the contrary, proponents of the exact methods insist that if aesthetics nurtures pretensions of calling itself a science it must be based on mathematics and related disciplines – cybernetics, information theory, semiology, etc. For these thinkers not individual, unique objects are the focus of attention, but those common properties of works of art, etc., in relation to cultural processes in the wide sense which can be formally analyzed in their structural interconnections and configurations. Birjukov and Geller recommend four interrelated domains to which exact methods can be profitably applied:

(1) the creative personality and the process of creation;
(2) the results of the creative process;
(3) channels of diffusion of cultural objects;
(4) reception of cultural objects.[130]

There has been a marked evolution among Soviet aestheticians in understanding just how exact methods can be applied to the investigaton of art and related aesthetic phenomena.[131] As far as B. M. Runin is concerned, the original impetus for conducting aesthetic research along the lines of exact methods came from the apparently successful descriptions of perceptions of tones, colors, symmetries, etc., in the languages of mathematics, physics, physiology, etc.[132] Why not see, became the question, what combination of such exactly describable perceptions produces an aesthetic experience. Wiener's and Shannon's information theory was adopted as the best possible framework for carrying out this project: art could be evaluated quantitatively on the basis of a probabilistic-statistical theory of information. Enthusiasts in the early sixties set out to construct formalized models of art in the spirit of models constructed in econometrics or sociometrics (in Russian the term '*iskusstvometrija*', literally 'art-metrics', came into circulation).

Essentially, this process of modelling is to consist of two steps or two levels of investigation into cultural-aesthetic phenomena. In the first, various 'human sciences' including aesthetics, supply factual material which is to be worked up by mathematical means. The object here is to discover the functional, i.e. behaviorial ties among the various elements defining a phenomenon, e.g. in aesthetics, to determine how 'information' flows along channels connecting artists and recipients of art works. In the second step, the most fundamental, essential aspects of these processes are singled out and employed in the construction of a model, a conceptual apparatus cutting across all fields of cultural activity, including artistic creation. The ultimate goal is the formulation of 'optimalistic criteria', i.e. criteria allowing for the elaboration of methods for the most effective organization and planning of cultural life.[133] This goal has clearly defined social and political advantages, since it fits in precisely with the general cultural policy of the Party in the formation of the so-called New Man of Socialist-Communist society.

It is objected by some that this interpretation of exactitude in aesthetics rests on false assumptions.[134] Mathematically inspired methods are not to be applied to artistic material in the form of an exterior veneer of symbolic notation and formulae. Their purpose is rather to provide rules for constructing clear and univocal statements as well as rules for determining acceptable transformations of these statements.[135] Furthermore, a purely quantitative approach hides a simplified view of mathematics, according to which only numbers as quantities concern mathematically inspired methods.[136] In considering, for example, a poem, proponents of information theory in aesthetic research sought to dig the 'information' out of the concrete poetic image,

leaving the superfluous emotional factors embodied in this image out of account.[137] But as soon as it was admitted that an emotion is nonetheless required to turn 'neutral' information into living aesthetic reality, viz. a poem, it is clear that information as such is neither artistic nor non-artistic and that a narrowly conceived 'exact method' could do little to explain the complexities of artistic phenomena.[138] Birjukov and others maintain that mathematics describes the phenomena of reality in their ontological situation, i.e. qualitatively, and that hence mathematically inspired methods (information theory, game theory, graph theory, semiology, etc.) can indeed discover new and interesting things about artistic material without introducing 'subjective' elements of any sort.[139] The issue is still controversial, however, since other writers, although not rejecting proposals like Birjukov's out of hand, nevertheless maintain that the most essential aspects of artistic material, viz. the aesthetic value of the content and its relation to the creative and/or receptive subject, cannot be and indeed have not been treated by formal methods alone.[140]

Submitting to the rising tide of criticism, some mathematically oriented aestheticians have turned increasingly to structural and semiological investigations to complement their purely formal considerations of art. On the one hand, this effort to find a way out of theoretical difficulties has given prominence to several semiological theories, especially that of Ju. Lotman and the group of scholars associated with him at the University of Tartu in Estonia.[141] On the other hand, since the very adoption of a semiological model for artistic, aesthetic material requires consideration of the pragmatic (next to the syntactic and semantic) aspect of signs, aestheticians have been looking increasingly at the social as well as the axiological, psychological, pedagogical, etc. factors supporting the meaningful use and reception of artistic signs.[142] This development has been one of the motivating forces in the development of a so-called 'complex-systems theory' approach to aesthetic phenomena, to which allusion has already been made in an earlier section. For the time being, however, some remarks should be made about the methodological significance of structural semiotic methods themselves, although there is no question of entering here into a detailed presentation.

Initially, the theories of Lotman and other semiologists received only scant attention from philosophical aestheticians since they were originally confined to the semiology of literature.[143] Already at this level, however, they were the subject of active discussions throughout the sixties on the pages of such prestigious journals as *Voprosy literatury*.[142] Lotman has since extended his considerations to art as a whole and its general relationship to reality.[145] As a

result, philosophical aestheticians too have begun to assess the significance of semiological theory for aesthetics.[146] Although the conclusions of the semiologists are by no means unanimously accepted, their basic idea – that art is a peculiarly organized system of signs transmitting aesthetic information, i.e. a language serving for the translation of an objective content (images of reality and for emotions) – has sparked off discussion among philosophers centering on the key concepts 'sign' ('aesthetic sign' in particular) and 'system', or, as it is more popularly named, 'structure'.

Some Soviet aestheticians have had a wary attitude toward semiological theory because at first glance it appears to square badly with a fundamental criterion for identifying what in their opinion is genuine art, viz. the category of realism (realist art). They have also had a difficult time differentiating the properties of aesthetic signs in comparison with other kinds of signs, e.g. those occurring in the sciences, a difficulty which recalls the problems of the 'vulgar gnoseologists' of an earlier era. In the case of signs in general, since they are usually regarded as being of a conventional nature, it is not clear how they could be faithful 'copies, photographs, representations, mirror-like reflections of things' signified. Lenin, in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, had 'devastatingly' criticized theories like Plekhanov's and before him Helmholtz' according to which our knowledge of external reality required the interpretation of conventional signs, symbols or hieroglyphs. On the sign theory of art realism would be *a priori* excluded from aesthetic theory because in fact the artist and the recipient would of necessity be imposing (different?) subjective contents on arbitrarily chosen signs deprived of authochthonous meaning. On the other hand, even if it were assumed that works of art do have a semiological character and that in spite of this they do reflect reality 'objectively', it is still not clear just what distinguishes the information borne by aesthetic signs from that contained in signs of a non-artistic character. One writer, U. I. Rižinašvili, excludes solutions proposing either that the sign represents some unique quality or object in a special way, or that the sign is a carrier of unique emotional and intellectual states, or that it is a combination of the two, expressed by saying that through his use of signs an artist achieves some kind of intimate contact with the recipient of his work.[147] All of these hypothetical solutions leave unresolved the fundamental uncertainty concerning the aesthetic specificity of artistic signs.

The same solution is proposed to both problems, viz. the introduction of the concepts 'system' or 'structure' in the context of the signs themselves.[148] Artistic signs obtain their aesthetic character from the *manner* in which they are organized, connected to one another. Unlike those employed in ordinary

or scientific discourse, artistic signs do not function autonomously. The objects signified by them are not given directly in perception, but instead are seen only in the light of associated complex psychic reactions called forth by the peculiar form in which the signs are organized.[149] As M. S. Kagan says, art is a human activity in which man creates a structure appropriate to and reflecting his circumstances in the world.[150] Concerning the structure of artistic signs, Ju. Martynenko writes:

> In the rules for uniting signs, in the order of their organization, a fully determinate law is reflected. This law characterizes both the system of connections of objective reality, which is reflected in the systems of signs, and the set of rules and principles by which a man guides himself in constructing a sign-complex.[151]

This theory echoes the concept of modelling proposed, by among others, Ju. Lotman, as the specific way in which art can be said to 'reflect' reality. But the essential point methodologically is the concept of 'system' or 'structure', which is logically prior to the concept of model.

Ju. Borev, in a recent far-ranging textbook,[152] is one of the few philosophical aestheticians to devote several pages to the concepts and rules of 'structuralism'. According to him, "structuralism ... considers a work of art as a determinate system governed by a lawful connection, as an organized manifold consisting of elements".[153] Borev evidently does not suppose that he is offering anything astonishingly new, because he immediately lists the names of prominent twentieth century 'structuralists': de Saussure, Trubeckoj, Jakobson, the Prague Circle, Špet, Žirminskij, Šklovskij, Ejchenbaum, Tynjanov, Bachelard and Levi-Strauss in that order. A structure, continues Borev, "[is] a system of transformations, possessing stable qualities, belonging to it as a whole and distinguished from the qualities constituting its elements".[154] Being a *whole* distinguishes a structure from a conglomerate, because the qualities characterizing the whole are not reducible to the qualities of the constitutive elements. Moreover, a structure is *polyvariant* in that it preserves its holistic qualities even when its underlying qualities are transformed or replaced by another set. Finally, there is a limit to the number (and kind) of transformations a structure will allow; the structure is *self-regulating*. From this description Borev derives three rather evident rules for analysis: (1) study the interconnections of the elements of a structure; (2) do not study them diachronically, but synchronically, according to the function each element has in the structure; (3) formalize the results of the analysis in models or schemata, a procedure which permits concretely dissimilar phenomena to be compared in the actual or potential isomorphisms they display.[155] It is clear

from the last rule of analysis that Borev's concept of structure comes from the exact sciences.

In spite of their increasing support for a semiotic structural approach, many aestheticians refuse to absolutize its claims that it exhausts the problems posed by the investigation of aesthetic phenomena. Instead, the style has become what was earlier referred to as the complex-systems theory approach.[156] In point of fact, this approach corresponds to the requirements of aestheticians who perceive the aesthetic problematic as fundamentally philosophical in character, but who refuse to pursue just their own intuitions, preferring to integrate empirical and formal methods of inquiry into their investigations. According to them, the extent of the problematic necessarily imposes such an approach.

They consider artistic culture in general to be characterized by a series of dialectical concepts which reveal the complexity of the phenomenon. It is said to be an organic unity of the material and the ideal, objective and subjective, rational and irrational, formulizable and non-formulizable.[157] In Kagan's phrase, it is impossible to verify the 'algebra of harmony' and yet it is equally impossible to demonstrate harmony without the help of an 'algebra'. What is required – to repeat what has been said above – is a constant shuttle between 'inexact' methods applied to studying particular cases of cultural objects, and 'cybernetic' or exact methods whose validity is circumscribed, limited to kinds of art works, to the general conditions under which certain objects will function as works of art, etc. In this way, what has been called the systemic-cybernetic, or the complex-systemic approach is gradually elaborated.

Soviet authors use the language of cybernetics rather loosely, employing such expressions as 'systemic-cybernetic' without much thought for especially rigorous definitions. It would seem, however, that the prevailing tendency is to employ the expressions 'systemic' and 'complex' to refer to the objects themselves, i.e. to artistic phenomena as constituting a sort of organic structure, where the elements are interconnected by a web of relations into a hierarchy of systems and sub-systems. Expressions like 'cybernetic', 'structural', etc. seem rather to refer to the methods of analysis of these 'systemic', 'complex' objects, where, as described above, the method is to consist of a mathematical filtration of factual material gathered from the particular sciences studying some facet of the artistic-cultural phenomenon in order to extract a formalized model of the entire system.[158]

Where art alone is concerned its complexity is dazzling. In answer to the question 'What is art?' Ju. Barabaš replies: nothing more, nothing less than "an ensemble of material values of different kinds and . . . a system of spiritual

values"; "... a form of reflection of the real world and a means of its transformation"; "... a social, class phenomenon and a sphere of ideology, also the world of beauty, the source of aesthetic enjoyment"; "a source of information", a means of interpersonal communication, "a stimulator of emotional energy and a means of educating man"; a relatively autonomous 'self-moving', system and also "a system which feels the influence of exterior, extra-aesthetic factors".[159] The 'polyfunctionality' and 'multisignificance' of art make it impossible to take one of its aspects in isolation or to absolutize one of the multiple methods required to do justice to this complex phenomenon.[160]

The semiotic method alone is incapable of explaining artistic representation; the theory of information reduces all criteria for evaluating art to a quantitative one; structuralism in a narrow sense limits itself to the investigation of the internal components of a work of art. Moreover, none of these methods satisfactorily explains artistic creativity and aesthetic perception. The psychology of creativity and artistic perception, if left to itself, can underestimate the gnoseological dimension, the cognitive value of art, and unless it is founded on physiology and biophysics, etc., it can do little more than report on the artist's or recipient's psychological biography. The sociological approach must be diversified so as to include empirical, statistical research (e.g. about the aesthetic tastes of some social segment) and theoretical model-building of, e.g., the function of art in society. But in order to avoid the pitfalls of 'vulgar sociologism', sociology cannot dispense with, e.g., structural methods, cultural anthropology, axiology, allowing it to conceive the genesis of art in a wide context of socially mediated human needs. And so forth for other associated disciplines.[161]

On the one hand, therefore, the aesthetic problematic is perceived by the majority of contemporary Soviet aestheticians as multi-faceted and hierarchical, in the sense that specifically aesthetic problems are inserted into a large context which illuminates their significance vis-à-vis an englobing problem (e.g. development of the human personality or the place of art in the spiritual culture of society). On the other hand, this intricate complexity makes it difficult for aestheticians to desist rationally from collaborating with any number of scientific and philosophical disciplines. But as shown in a preceding section, it is insisted that aesthetics is a philosophical discipline able to integrate the results of numerous particular investigations into a unified perspective.

In spite of this desideratum Soviet aestheticians failed for some time to produce an adequate model of aesthetic theory equipped to handle such a vast panoply of tasks. Some merely hoped to employ the basic principles of

Marxist-Leninist ontology to concretize this goal, that all things and phenomena are interconnected and subject to dialectical laws. This idea promoted the popularity of the historicist method in the sense of the last section. But in the end the general systems theory (Bertalanffy) seems to have intrigued Soviet scholars more than any other, because it is interpretable in the categories of the materialist dialectic. "It is necessary to clarify with all determination", says M. S. Kagan, "that the systems approach is a concrete manifestation of the dialectical method in those gnoseological situations where the objects of cognition turn out to be systemic objects".[162] It is not difficult to see how dialectical materialism can profit in this regard. Such categories as interconnection, increasing complexification and qualitative diversity of phenomena, correspond quite well to the systems view of the world.

Indeed, it is now said that one of the earliest successful applications of the systems approach is embodied in Marx's analysis of the logic of the capitalist system.[163] In the *Grundrisse* Marx writes:

> This very organic system, as an aggregate whole, has its preconditions, and its development in the direction of a whole consists in subordinating to itself all elements of a society or constructing still missing organs on its basis. On such a path the system is transformed into a whole in the process of historical development.

Kagan defines a system as a set of elements ordered in such a way that they constitute a whole whose qualities are not reducible to these elements.[164] At first this characterization resembles Borev's definition of a structure, but Kagan takes care not to identify the systems approach with structuralism, which does occasionally consider itself – falsely, according to Kagan – a 'systems-structural analysis'. For, in fact, every complex system requires probing from two related perspectives: a static one in order to study the constitution of the system, and a dynamic one, involving the function of the system and its elements as well as the development of the system. In short, the methodology of the systems approach involves the integration of structural, functional and genetico-historical methods.[165]

Kagan presents a list of rules of analysis for system-like objects:[166]

(1) clearly perceive the complex structure and do not reduce the whole to the part;

(2) single out those elements and/or subsystems which are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence of the qualitative uniqueness of the whole;

(3) uncover the type of connections uniting the elements or subsystems (e.g. coordination, subordination, etc.) and build a model of the structure;

(4) Consider every element or subsystem of the whole as a relatively autonomous whole integrated within a more inclusive system of wholes and having a constitutive function in it;

(5) analyze the interactivity of the system's elements in light of the system's exterior function;

(6) study the genesis of the system from the perspective of its contemporary state (the human anatomy is the key to understanding the ape's anatomy – Marx);

(7) search for the isomorphisms of historically and functionally interrelated systems;

(8) always combine diachronic and synchronic views of the system.

Using this machinery, art can be studied from several aspects as a hierarchical system of which each level may require a different particular method of investigation. On the whole, however, the program of investigation is not yet very elaborate nor is there a consensus of opinion as to the expected outcomes of this method. Ju. Barabaš distinguishes a historico-biographical level (social conditions, the biography of the artist, etc.), and an ideological-philosophical level (the artist's world view), both of which employ the tools of sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc.; further, Barabaš distinguishes "the level containing the system of expressive means of the given form of art", in other words, the 'language' of the art work, to be investigated by non-traditional methods (semiology, cybernetics, etc.); finally, Barabaš isolates what he calls the subject-compositional level to be investigated by 'comparative-typological' methods.[167] B. S. Mejlax suggests four aspects in the investigation of the system hierarchy of art; in the first art is to be studied diachronically and synchronically as a cultural macrostructure and diachronically within the framework of given periods and national cultures; secondly, art should be studied from the point of view of the genesis and function of artistic creativity; thirdly, the hierarchy of art forms, from 'pure' art to applied arts, is an essential subject of inquiry; finally, the work of art itself must be studied structurally, functionally and genetically.[168]

In Kagan's opinion, in spite of the complexity of the task and the character of the object of study, aestheticians will some day be able to construct a model of artistic structure in every way as exact and rigorous as the models of atomic molecules and genes constructed by physicists and biologists.[169] Ju. Barabaš, on the contrary, is more cautious about this possibility of a scientistic aesthetics. Although it is not in principle impossible to construct a 'finished' model of a work of art, two interconnected difficulties beset the path of the aesthetician in this regard. Since an analysis in the style set forth

above considers the internal structure of a work of art in function of its dynamic relationship to the outside 'world', it would be vain to set a limit to the number of possible combinations of elements an art work could come into contact with and hence the number of 'levels' that would satisfy some criterion of a maximally complete analysis of a work of art. Heuristically, therefore, an analytic model of an individual work is more practicable than a universalized, general model which, given the empirical derivation of levels, would have in part to be based on speculation, on hypotheses that may never be adequately confirmed. Moreover, Barabaš points out that since an art work possesses a holistic aesthetic significance, and is not just a random assortment of levels of different significance, the aesthetician's model must 'reflect' the aesthetic significance of the work of art taken as a whole.[170]

1.4. THE SUB-DIVISIONS OF THE AESTHETIC PROBLEMATIC

The foregoing discussion about the object and method of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics is directly relevant to the various formulations of the sub-divisions of the field of investigation. There exists a direct correspondence between what Soviet aestheticians have to say about the object and method of aesthetics and the choice and ordering of questions which constitute the scaffolding of their discipline. The following logic seems to be at work at the basis of this correspondence: the more narrow and restricted the object is, the more specific is the approach to it, such that the range of questions constituting chapters of the discipline are restrained. Conversely, the more widely, as it were, the object is defined, the more ramified becomes the methodological perspective and the discipline gains in extension and detail.

Allusion has already been made to the hostile attitude prevailing in the twenties toward an independent aesthetic discipline. The program of investigation corresponded *grosso modo* to the four points discussed earlier under the heading 'vulgar sociology', that is to say, everything traditionally accorded the qualification 'aesthetic' was conceived in this early period in terms of social, economic and political factors. The aesthetic was virtually ignored.

The restricted interests of aestheticians during the second period, interests reflecting their 'civic' duty to further the fortunes of the doctrine of Socialist Realism as the sole correct artistic method, led to the formulation of the program in 1948.[171] The proposed textbook, *Osnovy marksistskoj-leninskoj estetiki*, would contain an introduction and three parts, of which the last part alone would have half the number of sections of the entire book. Given the prevailing stress on realist art, the introduction would have as its task to

situate the cognitive character of art vis-à-vis the Marxist-Leninist gnoseology and the theory of social consciousness. Parts one and two would be devoted to the history of aesthetic thought: Ancient and Renaissance doctrines only in the first part and the emergence and development of Marxist-Leninist aesthetic thought in Part Two. Both of these parts would have as their guiding thread the struggle of materialist and idealist conceptions in aesthetics and the parallel development of aesthetic and philosophical doctrines on this basis. Part Three, given over to the systematic discussion of the fundamental tenets of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, was to consist of fourteen sections, of which only one was to be devoted to traditional aesthetic categories – the beautiful, the ugly, the comic, treated, for that matter, socio-gnoseologically, i.e. according to the fashion in which they reflect not just reality *tout court*, but social reality in particular. The remaining sections were to be devoted to the doctrines associated with 'vulgar gnoseologism' and the tenets of Socialist Realism.

The unsatisfactory state of this program was evident from the beginning. Successive issues of *Voprosy filosofii*, where the program was originally published, carried critical articles and even '*Peredovaja*' (leading editorial articles) pointing out deficiencies in the program and in the state of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics.[172] In 1955 an article in *Voprosy filosofii* entitled '*O zadačax marksistskoj-leninskoj estetiki*'[173] [On the Tasks of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics], though not directly concerned with the 1948 program, offered a point for point criticism of it, beginning with the observation that philosophers have heretofore hardly concerned themselves with the development of aesthetic science! Although maintaining the central importance of art's cognitive function, the article chided aestheticians for the underdeveloped state of the history of aesthetics as well as for the pitiful condition in which the aesthetic categories found themselves. In response to such criticisms P. S. Trofimov, the promulgator of the 1948 program, edited a collective work *Voprosy marksistskoj-leninskoj estetiki* [Questions of Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics] in 1956, in which he and a number of associates attempted to resolve some of the difficulties, especially the question of aesthetic categories, to which central importance was given in the book.[174] However, since the object of aesthetics had become the focal point of discussion in the mid-fifties, the program of an aesthetics discipline was suspended until 1960.

Although the *Osnovy marksistskoj-leninskoj estetiki* were published in 1960 when the controversy about the nature of the aesthetic had not yet reached its culmination, its construction was weighted in favor of the group proclaiming the human origins of the aesthetic. The work is divided into four

parts, reproducing the logical order of argument employed by this group. In the first part, the history of aesthetic thought, including the Marxist variant, is exposed only after the object of aesthetics and the nature of the discipline have been defined. Following the basic definition given at this time of the aesthetic, Part Two is first devoted to the general aesthetic relation of man to reality and then to art as the highest form of man's appropriation of reality aestheticially. In comparison with the preceding period, this program is already considerably richer in content thanks to its discussion of the origins and development of the human aesthetic sense, the emergence of the aesthetic attitude vis-à-vis reality. Part Three is concerned with the fundamental aesthetic categories, conceived as expressions of man's aesthetic attitude, and the specific way in which they are realized in the various forms of art. Finally, the discussion of realism, Socialist art and its functions in Socialist society constitutes the culminating part of the book. The virtually *a priori*, purely philosophical approach to the field of aesthetic issues was frequently reaffirmed by aestheticians, whether or not they supported the views sanctioned by the *Osnovy*.[175] But under the impact of the new interest arising in the early sixties for the scientific-technological revolution, one author, I. L. Maca, extended this speculative framework about as far as possible without mentioning particular empirical and exact sciences.[176] Maca proposed the following domains for aesthetic theory:

(1) the theory of the aesthetic appropriation of natural phenomena and objects;

(2) the theory of man's organization of the natural environment;

(3) the theory of the transformation of materials having a practical significance in man's life (e.g. tools);

(3) the theory of artistic culture (creativity, the content of art, etc.); Maca's criterion for this subdivision is the recognition that throughout history man has gradually expanded the circle of objects with which he has come to have contact and that in turn his ability to evaluate aesthetically has increased proportionately.[177]

Maca's examination of the structure of aesthetics bordered on the developments of the contemporary discussion. In the words of the new official textbook from 1973, *Marksistskaja-leninskaja estetika* [Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics], "The object of aesthetics is constantly expanding and its methods of investigation, in assimilating the achievements of other sciences, are being perfected more and more".[178] Nevertheless, in spite of the wide agreement as to an 'open' aesthetic, there still does not exist a commonly held program, even if the general lines are clear.

Applying the systemic, hierarchical methodology he advocates, M. S. Kagan develops his well-known *Lekcii po marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* [Lessons in Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics] according to the following plan. The aesthetic appropriation of reality by man entails a valuative relationship between man and the world concretized in this case in the system of aesthetic categories whose dialectical polarities are the basis for the continuing deployment by man of his activity. Kagan analyzes this deployment in the ordered series of subsystems: art – artistic communication – artistic culture – social relations, each of which is complex and dynamic (requiring numerous chapters) and tends for completion in the others (as subsystems they are isomorphic).[179] All of them together provide a picture, a model, of aesthetic appropriation as an artistic doubling of reality according to the progressive transformative activity of man.

The textbook, *Marksistskaja-leninskaja estetika*, is less internally systematic than Kagan's and like its predecessor, the *Osnovy*, it is the work of a large team of authors, many of whom have publicly criticized one another in their own publications. The text is divided into five parts of which the first is devoted to aesthetics as a science, the next three to art and the last one to the cultural tasks of socialist society. The first part contains, beside the standard, though now considerably restricted historical excursus, a discussion of the key categories (beautiful, tragic, comic), a statement on methodology in support of the complex-systems approach and a section devoted to the specificity of aesthetic consciousness and activity by L. Novikova whose ideas were briefly mentioned in Section 2 above. Novikova does not lay the same stress on the axiological conception of the aesthetic that Kagan does, although values do figure in her description and analysis of the aesthetic consciousness.

In comparison with the *Osnovy* this text is testimony to the progress made by the Soviets in the area of the aesthetics of art. What is new is the relatively long (thirty pages) section on the aesthetic perception of art, including such concepts as 'aesthetic distance' (reminiscent of Bullough's concept of 'psychical distance'). The Soviets continue to treat artistic genres in this text as in the *Osnovy*, although in view of the proposed systems methodology, according to which the arts must be understood in their interrelations, the analysis gains in interest and is less subject to canonical stereotypes still prevalent in the *Osnovy*. In the fourth part, Kagan summarizes an essential section of his 1971 text, viz. the theory of the role and function of art in the socio-cultural system. Finally, the volume treats the mandatory conceptions of Socialist Realism, though much more briefly than in the past.

Ju. Borev has recently (1975) systematized the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic

problematic in clear and straightforward fashion in his text *Estetika*. Since the object of aesthetics as a science is laws, Borev classifies aesthetic laws under five general types:

(1) the meta-laws of aesthetic activity (the general philosophical background);

(2) laws of art as a form of social consciousness;

(3) the laws of artistic creativity;

(4) the laws of the artistic process (historical development and differentiation of art forms);

(5) the laws of artistic perception.[180] If these types of laws govern the general sense and purpose of aesthetic activity, the aesthetic categories reflect the stages of the historical evolution and function of man's appropriation of the world. Borev lists ten different types of aesthetic category, a list which, in fact, constitutes the best guide to the problems confronted and treated by Soviet aestheticians today:

(1) the aesthetic appropriation of the world;
(2) gnoseology of art;
(3) sociology of art;
(4) anthropology of art;
(5) axiology of art;
(6) ontologies and structures of art works;
(7) the artistic process;
(8) the creative process;
(9) aesthetic perception;
(10) the morphology of art.[181]

Borev insists that the unity of the system, the monism to which Marxist-Leninist aesthetics aspires in spite of the complexity of the aesthetic phenomenon, is provided by the valuative orientation of socialist man to the world at large, who judges the historical process in the light of Communist ideals.

In view of the entire foregoing discussion the different Soviet conceptions of the object and methods of aesthetics can be arranged in the following pairs, chronologically reflecting the passage from narrow to increasingly broad conceptions of aesthetics.

1. Art as a socio-economic phenomenon (1920–c. 1934) – class determination of art – 'psycho-ideology'	:	Sociology of art – economic determinism – functional geneticism – ideologism – relativism
2. Art as a cognitive phenome-	:	'Vulgar gnoseologism'

non (1934–c. 1956) – peopleness – classness – partymindedness	:	(Socialist Realism) – reflection – image and typification
3. Aesthetic and artistic appropriation (1956–c. 1966) – 'specificity' of the aesthetic: – as a form of social consciousness – as a mode of cognition – 'specificity' of art – nature and objectivity of aesthetic 'categories'	:	'Philosophico-historist' method vs. 'dialectical materialist' method – 'Societalism' vs. 'naturism'
4. Aesthetic and artistic appropriation in a polyvalent ensemble of material and spiritual activities – 'spiritual-practical' activity – values – aesthetic information and communication	:	'Exact' methods 'Genetico-functional' method 'Complex-systems' method Axiology (Relationism)

CHAPTER II

THE SOURCES AND ORIGINS OF MARXIST-LENINIST AESTHETICS

The following will hardly do justice to the real historical stimuli and sources of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics. All that is undertaken here is merely a report on the most evident and therefore most widely publicized precursors of Soviet aesthetics, viz. those belonging directly or by cooptation to the Marxist tradition.

Research by a certain few Marxists has demonstrated to what extent Marx and Engels were creatures of their habitat, sensitive to and absorbing ideas and orientations from the Enlightenment, the German classical philosophical and aesthetic tradition, utopian socialism and even romanticism.[1] Accordingly, a thoroughgoing analysis of the sources of Soviet aesthetic thought would have to account for the influence exerted on the 'classics' by the likes of Hegel, Kant, Winckelmann, Fichte, Schiller, Schlegel, Vischer, Rousseau, Diderot, *et. al.*, most of whom Marx and Engels appear to have been conversant with. In turn, the Russian influences on Lenin, extending at least through to the beginning of the twentieth century, influences which were more often than not combined with hackneyed assimilations of the same movements working directly on Marx and Engels, would have to be taken into account in order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the intellectual soil on which Soviet aesthetics has haltingly taken form. As yet, few serious studies of these manifold influences have been undertaken by Soviet writers, a situation that has from time to time been lamented in the Soviet Union. Moreover, as we shall see below, some of the 'direct' sources have experienced sudden shifts of popularity and approval. In the end it is difficult to say how the Soviets assess their own tradition. In our investigation we shall follow the Soviet accounts. This means that Lenin is treated directly after Marx and Engels and before Plekhanov, who was his senior. The reason is merely that Lenin is counted together with the 'classics' as an originator of Soviet aesthetics.

2.1. KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS

Virtually without exception Soviet aestheticians today affirm that not only does the doctrine of Marx and Engels contain coherent aesthetic views, but that these represent a 'radical' and 'fundamental' breakthrough in aesthetic

thinking. However, given the fragmentary and nearly epigrammatic character of their statements in matters aesthetic – statements scattered randomly throughout their works and never amounting to a systematic disquistion in any sense – it is hard to see how this exalted claim can be legitimated. Moreover, the sometimes drastic about-faces that have shaken Soviet aesthetic theory seem considerably to weaken the claim for believing that Marx and Engels furnished their disciples with clear and distinct answers, never mind a readily ascertainable orientation.

The few Western scholars who have paid any attention to Marx's and Engels' purported aesthetic views are at most willing to accord the possibility that the Marxist world view may afford new and interesting insights into traditional aesthetic questions. According to Solomon,

> There is no 'original' Marxist aesthetics for later Marxists to apply. The history of Marxist aesthetics has been the history of the unfolding of the possible applications of Marxist ideas to the arts and to the theory of art.[2]

In his history of Western aesthetic thought Monroe Beardsley speaks merely of the partial foundations laid by Marx and Engels and later filled out by Lenin and his followers.[3] Two sympathetic writers, Lang and Williams, however, while not eschewing the evidence of the texts, maintain that aesthetic concepts are of central importance in the Marxist theory:

> first, by way of the roles assigned creativity and sensibility in the eventual classless society toward which Marxist theory as a whole points and, second, in the aesthetic tenor of the general philosophical categories at work in his thought.[4]

This statement echoes Robert Tucker's observation that the whole of Communist theory is "fundamentally aesthetic in character".[5]

As far as Soviet aestheticians are concerned, they first of all unanimously agree that whatever the significance of the remarks by Marx and Engels on art, etc., the very orientation of their work as a whole is enough to provide an authentically scientific foundation for aesthetics. "In dealing with the questions of art and culture, the importance of Marxist theory would be immense even if nothing were known about the aesthetic views of the founders of Marxism".[6] Second, despite the conspicuous absence of anything even resembling a systematic disquisition by the 'classics' on their aesthetic views, Soviet aestheticians make all sorts of elaborate and less elaborate claims concerning the systematic character of these views. Some writers unabashedly proclaim that not only the foundations but the very doctrine itself were spelled out in detail, while others, taking a more cautious line in the face of

the available evidence, affirm that aesthetics got off to a new and fruitful start with Marx and Engels, and was developed by a number of lesser and greater disciples; Lenin in particular.

An example of the first kind of approach is the statement by M. F. Ovsjannikov, a champion for an original Marxist aesthetic.

> The aesthetic views of Marx and Engels are a constitutive part of their philosophical theory and practical-political struggle for the liberation of the working masses from capitalist slavery. Possessing an encyclopedic knowledge in the domain of the history of world art and world aesthetic thought, Marx and Engels . . . created a consistently scientific materialist aesthetic conception.[7]

P. S. Trofimov is even more extravagant in his claims, denying absolutely nothing to the 'classics'.

> Marx and Engels, having created the only true philosophical and historical theory, developed an aesthetic system distinguishing itself by rigor, consistency and scientific completeness. For the first time they created a materialist aesthetics. Marx and Engels thereby completed the construction of . . . a scientific materialist aesthetics . . . right up to the very end.[8]

Given this state of affairs, it would be hard to understand what purpose other than exegetical and interpretation Soviet aestheticians could find for themselves, since on this view of the legacy bestowed on them they have had the astonishingly good fortune of being presented with a complete theory.

The more normal interpretation, however, both in content and tone, is represented by M. Lifšic, one of the deans of contemporary Soviet aesthetics and the first to write a study about Marx's aesthetic views.

> Marx and Engels did not leave us a minutely developed aesthetic theory. Their profound thoughts, having a relation to aesthetics, should not be considered as a ready answer to every question . . .[9]

But Lifšic adds, ". . . such an answer is contained in Marxism as a world view. It is contained in it only potentially i.e. it is a possible [answer], but this possibility . . . has a fully defined character".[10] The task of the scholar consists in trying to tie in the remarks of the 'classics' with the general development of Marxist theory, about whose principles and manner of application there can be no doubt.[11] This task is facilitated for the prospective interpreter thanks to the method employed by the 'classics' themselves, a method said to be eminently concrete and anti-academic. Their analysis of aesthetic phenomena was always inextricably connected with the analysis of real social formations.[12] The implication is that this framework for analysis plus the few

choice remarks proffered by Marx and Engels clearly illuminate the path to follow in building an aesthetic doctrine. In the long run, they claim therefore, care should be taken not to confuse the absence of a system of views with the possibility of a rigorous formulation in the light of the systematic character of the Marxist doctrine as a whole.

Much the same kind of argument is employed to turn the fragmentary, aphoristic state of the 'classic' remarks on aesthetic matters to their honor and glory. Although some writers, for example Ovsjannikov and Trofimov quoted above, prefer to pass over in silence the question of the *disiecta membra*, most, in admitting their non-systematic character, explain it away by combining biographical and theoretical data. Having been absorbed all their lives in the revolutionary struggle of the working masses, their failure to devote as much attention to aesthetic matters as previous philosophers ". . . only proves that the founders of international working class solidarity were fully equal to their historical task and concentrated all their effort on the fundamental problems of suffering and struggling humanity".[13] Moreover, the methodological requirements of their theory prevented a narrow and restricted interest in aesthetic questions, even though, to repeat, aesthetics for the first time was elevated to the rank of science thanks to Marx and Engels. A Polish author commented: "It can be said that Marx's forsaking of special aesthetic studies and the passage to political economy were the sole way for laying the foundations for a scientific aesthetics – Marxist aesthetics".[14] These methodological requirements were, on the one hand, the explanation of art, just like other forms of social consciousness, by non-aesthetic socio-economic factors, and, on the other hand, the conception of a totality of intermediated human activities. Considering art as a social phenomenon, Marx and Engels were less concerned with passing judgments and offering evaluations of particular works of art, etc. than with understanding the origins and development of art.[15] And because their desire was to grasp the interrelations of man's activities, "An historical understanding – in Kołakowski's formulation of the principle – of people's behavior – as thinking, working, artistically experiencing, as passive and creative – must be holistic or no understanding at all".[16] In other words, since Marx and Engels had been intent on explaining the way the totality of human ideas and products fell together in a socially mediated whole, their interest in aesthetic questions had obviously to take second place behind the theoretical requirement to describe and explain the social whole and the fashion in which *all* its parts came to be included within it.

Biographically, there is nevertheless evidence that from time to time throughout their lives Marx and Engels turned explicitly to aesthetic themes

in order to research and write about them.[17] Three periods in Marx's career illustrate this life-long flirtation with aesthetics. As a university student Marx passionately studied the history of art, taking courses with Schlegel. In these early years, he also wrote what one Western commentator has called 'execrable' poetry, much of it devoted to his betrothed, Jenny von Westphalen, and some of it discussed, even critically, in correspondence with his father. M. Lifšic has carried out an exceedingly protracted analysis of these poems, tracing through them the influences on Marx and trying to show how from an early age aesthetics occupied a central place in Marx's world view.[18] In a second period – 1841–1842 at Bonn – Marx collaborated with Bruno Bauer on a never culminated critique of Hegel's doctrines of art and religion. Thirdly, in 1857 he seems to have seriously entertained an offer from the *New American Cyclopedia* to write the entry on aesthetics. He got no further than to jot down extracts from Vischer's *Aesthetik* and other writings by prominent students of the subject. Finally, he seems to have conceived an ill-fated project to produce an extended analysis of Balzac's *Comédie Humaine*.

Engels, too, was not a stranger to the domain. As of an early age he wrote poetry under a pseudonym, composed music for choral societies and later became something of a self-styled literary critic. Although his ventures into this last named field were confined to epistolary comments to various writers about their styles and the sense of their works, they have come to have oracular importance for Soviet aesthetics.

It was not until the thirties that Soviet aestheticians began to manifest interest in the original aesthetic views of the classics. Previously, although a few studies existed on the subject,[19] it had been generally accepted that nothing of significance was to be found on this subject and that the real founder of 'Marxist' aesthetics was G. V. Plekhanov. It was not until the early thirties that a number of works by Marx and Engels were published, works which are said to have brought to light the formative, constitutive impact of aesthetics on the doctrine as a whole.[20] These included the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* and the *German Ideology*, both published in 1932, Marx's and Engels' letters to F. LaSalle, Engel's letters to Minna Kautsky, Margaret Harkness and P. Ernst, also published in 1932. From this moment onwards, books and articles began to appear regularly, devoted to exposing and analyzing Marx's and Engels' aesthetic views, especially in relation to literature, which at that time was receiving overwhelming attention in the debate that culminated in the promulgation of Socialist Realism in 1934. In 1933 a series of articles appeared by G. Lukács, at that time researching in exile in Moscow, and F. Šiller entitled *Marks i Engel's ob iskusstve* [Marx

and Engels on Art], involving an analysis of the classics' remarks about F. LaSalle's play *Franz von Sickingen.*[21] One of the first studies on literary realism was B. Rjurikov's article 'Marx and the Essence of Realism' [Towards the Problem of Socialist Realism][22] in which extensive use was made of the newly edited texts by Marx on E. Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, and by Engels on Balzac's realism. Engels' literary critical remarks were collected and commented on for the first time by F. P. Šiller,[23] while the first effort to reconstruct Marx's views in this regard was published in 1933 by M. Lifšic under the title *K voprosu o vzgljadach Marksa na iskusstvo* [Toward the Question of Marx's Views on Art], in which Lifšic boldly made use of the 'early' Marx's thought, a tendency lost from sight during the silent years of Stalinist orthodoxy. It was also to Lifšic that the honor fell of compiling the first edition of texts by Marx and Engels, bearing in any way whatsoever on aesthetic issues. Published in 1933 under the sacrosanct title *O literature i iskusstve* [On Literature and Art][24] it was repeatedly expanded, coming eventually to incorporate nearly 1500 pages in the latest, most comprehensive, German edition![25] Grouped under different classificatory headings these texts consist of selections drawn from Marx's and Engels' correspondence, reviews, encyclopedic articles, marginal notes, manuscript jottings, and excerpts from their larger works in which comments about art and artists occur usually by way of illustrations.

In one of the most recent editions[26] of the 'sayings of the classics', the material is organized into several major sections from more or less systematic to historical subjects. First comes the relevant conceptual framework: 'The materialist conception of the history of culture', consisting primarily of the theory of base and superstructure and Engels' epistolary defense of the doctrine against vulgarizers. Next comes a section entitled 'General Problems of Art' in which are collected dicta about subjects ranging from realism in art, the tragic and comic, language, style and the problems of translation. After this come two sections which constitute the *differentia specifica* of Marxist aesthetics: 'Art in Class Society' and 'Art and Communism' in which anything Marx and Engels had to say about the 'spiritual life of society' in the context of the analysis and critique of class societies is faithfully reproduced. A central theme here is the hostility of capitalism, of the capitalist mode of production and the resulting social relations, to genuine art, i.e. the free, untrammelled expression of the creative potential of man. Much of the volume is devoted to arranging their polemical harangues and occasional laudatory assessments of great men of letters, *et al.* according to epoch and situation within the social process. The volume ends with a curious collection of

reminiscences of Marx and Engels by family members, friends and others calculated to leave an impression of their genial natures and profound knowledge and love of culture.

The manner in which this mass of material is organized provides an insight into what are considered to be the contributions of the classics to the doctrine. One analyst of the tradition, Stefan Morawski, writing with all the hindsight made possible by that tradition, speaks of three sorts of texts contained in their writings.[27] The first, dealing with 'dominant themes', elaborates a topic explicitly and coherently. These include, according to Morawski, the genesis of the aesthetic sense, the alienation of the artist, realism, tendentiousness, and the class equivalents of art. The second type of texts, 'observations', contains "a thesis but partially developed and thus somewhat unclear . . .". Among these observations are views on the nature of aesthetic qualities and of aesthetic experience, the universally human equivalent in art works and the enduring values of art, the comic and tragic, form and style. The last category, called 'remarks' by Morawski, comprises what might be called 'off the cuff comments', not containing sufficient information to develop a thesis. Such comments are about the distinction between science and art, the relation of philosophy to artistic creation, and the hierarchy of artistic values. Morawski's classification does not seem to involve a sifting and accounting for the multiple references by Marx and Engels to writers and artists, references which add up to an index of nearly seventy-five pages in the aforementioned German edition of their thoughts.

Soviet aestheticians do not, on the whole, distinguish among such themes, observations and remarks by the classics, treating everything they had to say on an equal footing and as following rigorously from their world outlook. But on the other hand, Soviet accounts of the contributions of the 'classics' have by no means been characterized by constancy. It is especially the 'observations' that have been a source of trouble, in particular the status of aesthetic qualities and aesthetic experience, or, in Soviet terminology, the question of the nature of the aesthetic. Not only has there been a controversy as to the proper interpretation of certain key Marxian texts on this question, but there is the added difficulty that other acknowledged sources of Soviet doctrine, viz. the Russian tradition from Belinskij, Černyševskij to Lenin seem to have bequeathed some problematic 'observations' to their contemporary disciples which do not wholly accord with those of Marx.

The greatest difficulty has been that of trying to reconcile the early philosophy of Marx, doubtless the richest source in Marxist literature of insights concerning the philosophical foundations of aesthetics, with the Engelsian-

Leninist copy, reflection theory, supported by remarks from the Russian revolutionary democrats. There is still no evidence that since 1932, when the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* were first published, the Soviets have found a way to cope with the difficulties. Even though M. Lifšic's groundbreaking study of Marx's aesthetics appeared in 1933, Apresjan reports that in the thirties the 'Philosophico-Aesthetic' problematic continued to be narrowly identified with the doctrine of base and superstructure, the relative autonomy of ideological forms, the correlation of the material and the spiritual in artistic production, the irregularity of artistic development, the hostility of capitalism to art, etc.[28] Nor was the question of the aesthetic explicitly mentioned in the 1948 program as being among the important points raised by Marx and Engels. At this time the last issue was resolved in the classic fashion by correlating the struggle of Marx and Engels against idealism against aesthetics: by combatting idealist philosophy Marx and Engels quite clearly condemned the resulting aesthetics, substituting in each case the point of view of dialectical materialism explicated by recourse to Engels and Lenin. When the *Osnovy marksistskoj-leninskoj filosofii* was published in 1960 there was a brief reference in the Introduction to Marx's remark about the artistic appropriation of reality, although since the question was highly controversial in that year, fuller discussion of the point was left to a systematic chapter of *Osnovy*, defending an interpretation not shared by all at the time. The former text (authored by M. F. Ovsjannikov), bearing on Marx and Engels as the founders of a new aesthetic, appeared once again in 1973[29] and 1974[30]. In 1973 the question of the nature of the aesthetic was entirely omitted, being relegated to a systematic discussion in a later chapter of the book, while in the 1974 version Ovsjannikov put the issue in the first place, baldly declaring that Marx and Engels gave an authentically scientific materialist resolution of the question of the origin and the specificity of "aesthetic consciousness', including the question of the nature of "aesthetic appropriation" and that of aesthetic qualities, called categories, following traditional style.

2.2. LENIN

In most respects the situation with Lenin's aesthetic views closely resembles that of Marx and Engels. Like the views of Marx and Engels, they are incidental and scattered randomly throughout his writings; but they are accorded by the Soviets a coherence and rigorously systematic character, complementing to some extent the views of Lenin's illustrious predecessors. Like Marx and Engels, Lenin was too involved with the leadership of the revolutionary party

ever to be able to devote himself singlemindedly to aesthetic problems. But again, like them, he considered art a part of the social whole governed by laws whose prior explication was a *conditio sine qua non* for understanding the sense and function of aesthetic phenomena in human culture. In addition, however, Lenin was engaged in combatting pernicious influences that risked producing grave aberrations in the Marxist movement and, according to the commentators, his theoretical sallies against these false ideas threw an even clearer light on the scientific foundations of Marxist aesthetics.

On paper Lenin is accorded a position equal to that of Marx and Engels in the formation of aesthetic theory. Stalin's opinion that Lenin was the Marxist philosopher of the era of imeprialism and proletarian revolutions is frequently cited with regard to aesthetic theory. In reality, however, his authority seems to be considerably greater than theirs. His predominant influence is manifest in several ways. Where, for example, there may be a dispute about a fine point of Marx's and Engels' views, Lenin is invoked as a criterion for resolving the controversy, it being usually assumed that Lenin's views coincide in all respects with those of his predecessors. By the same token Lenin's views serve as a means of verification of the validity of Marx's and Engels' views. This is so, because, although many texts by Marx and Engels were unknown to Lenin, he is said to have perfectly reproduced their essential content thanks to the fruitfulness of the Marxist method and Lenin's own particular genius. E.g. Lenin was able to reproduce their views on the cognitive value of art (realism) and the ability of the artist to transcend his class outlook and loyalties in order to describe the contradictions of the social order as a whole accurately. Furthermore, Lenin's admiration for the Russian revolutionary democrats (Belinskij, Černyševskij, Dobroljubov *et al.*) explains the central place of certain themes in Soviet aesthetic doctrine, themes that do not as such occur in Marx and Engels. In particular, the three essential components of Socialist Realism, viz. *narodnost'*, *klassovost'*, *partijnost'*, are Leninist in origin, inspired by his praise of the doctrines of the revolutionary democrats. Most significant has been the wholesale incorporation of the Leninist epistemology into aesthetics, a theory which occupies pride of place as the sole valid scientific foundation for Marxist aesthetics. As in the preceding instance, Lenin's views are said to reproduce perfectly not only Engels' but also Marx's epistemological standpoint, a claim which has certainly been controversial and does not spare even the Soviet aesthetic discussion of far-reaching tensions at its foundations.[34] The central importance of Lenin's epistemology is even manifest in Soviet art criticism and analysis of bourgeois aesthetic theories. The polemical context within which

Lenin originally put forth his epistemological views – the struggle against Machism and empiriocriticism – serves as the model for what to condemn in aesthetics and artistic developments. What the Soviets lump under the derogatory heading 'modernism' is most often defined in the terms of Lenin's polemic with the empiriocriticists. As a consequence, Lenin's remarks, made in an entirely different context, have had an enormous effect on what can and cannot be considered legitimate art and serve Soviet aestheticians as food for analysis.

In spite of Soviet claims to the contrary, Lenin's purported aesthetic views must be interpolated into his remarks. If in comparison Marx and Engels did address themselves to certain traditional aesthetic questions, even if only cursorily and schematically, Lenin touched on none of these questions, leaving Soviet aestheticians with the task of second-guessing him on all counts. The three most important sources of his purported aesthetic ideas are the block of six brief essays on L. Tolsoy,[32] the publicistic article 'Party Organization and Party Literature',[33] as well as passages from *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism* and *Philosophical Notebooks*. Besides, the correspondence of Lenin with Gorkij is another major source of ideas. But, as in the case of Marx and Engels, Lenin's strictly political tracts are given significance in this domain too. Since virtually all of Lenin's personal views are set out in polemical contexts, that is, they were produced circumstantially for the sake of tactical moves which underwent both subtle and sudden changes over different periods of time, Lenin's aesthetics cannot be divorced from their background. In a recently edited three-volume French presentation of Lenin's enunciations on literature and art, J. M. Palmier[34] identifies ten different polemical contexts in which important aesthetic moments are interpolated:

– Lenin's struggle against populism;
– the question of the cultural heritage and the proletariat;
– literary questions in Bolshevik newspapers;
– party literature and the intellectuals;
– Lenin and Gorkij;
– Bogdanov and the movement for a proletarian culture;
– the question of a national culture;
– Lenin on Tolstoy;
– Lunačarskij and the Narkompros;
– the arts and the October revolution.

Although basically agreeing with this listing, Soviet accounts add the polemic with the empiriocriticists and classify Lenin's contributions under the following headings:[35]

– the gnoseological foundations of art: the reflection theory of artistic experience (the articles on Tolstoy, the letters to Gorkij and Lenin's philosophical disquisitions);

– partymindedness in art: artistic freedom and social responsibility vis-à-vis the progressive world-view of the workers' party (Lenin's article on party literature and his remarks about the Bolshevik press);

– the cultural heritage: against iconoclasm and for preserving continuity with the tradition (Bogdanov and the Proletkult);

– popular culture: the 'people-ness' and 'classness' of art (Lenin's periodization of the Russian revolutionary movement, the remark about two cultures in every national culture).

If the latter two points are more or less free of controversy, Soviet aestheticians are exceedingly defensive about their interpretation of the relevant texts where the former points are concerned, especially before 'revisionists' and bourgeois anti-Communists who consistently called into question their interpretations. Ostensibly, the article 'Party Organization and Party Literature' (written in 1905 in response to problems confronted by revolutionaries) treats of the reasons why, in Lenin's words, "literature must become a component of organized, planned and integrated Social-Democratic Party Work".[36] But in seeming disregard for Lenin's qualifications of the term 'literature' (as applying to party literature, i.e. propaganda tracts), the Soviet interpretation has traditionally extended the expression to all literature or 'imaginative literature' as Lenin put it.[37] As far as the applications of the reflection theory to art is concerned, Soviet writers never tire of insisting that Lenin (and not Ždanov and Gorkij) conceived it to be valid for aesthetic as well as for strictly epistemological issues. In order to prove this, the following evidence has been assembled.[38] In the year that Lenin wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (1908) he also wrote and published the first of his Tolstoy articles, entitled 'Leo Tolstoy, Mirror of the Russian Revolution'. In the first paragraph of that essay Lenin wrote: ". . . if we have before us a really great artist, he must have reflected in his work at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution".[39] The expression 'reflection' in this statement is, not surprisingly, supposed to carry the same meaning Lenin assigned it in his famous definition in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* according to which the concept of matter means "objective reality, existing independently of human consciousness and reflected by it". Without any compunction, Soviet authors exchange the term 'revolution' for the term 'reality' such that one author writes about ". . . Lenin's thought about the reflection of the essential aspects of reality in really great works of art . . .", it being doubtless under-

stood that reality is revolutionary in essence anyway.[40] As further proof that Lenin intended his reflection theory for aesthetics, Soviet writers quote the following passage from *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*:

> One must be blind not to see the ideological affinity between Lunačarskij's deification of the higher human potentialities and Bogdanov's general substitution of the psychical for all physical nature. This is one and the same thought: in the one case it is expressed principally from the aesthetic standpoint and in the other from the epistemological standpoint.[41]

Shortly after *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* was published, Lenin wrote in 'Notes of a Publicist': "In our day a struggle between the Marxists and the Machists has come to the force and is being waged in the domain of science, philosophy and art".[42] Clearly, by citing these passages, Soviet writers imply that in exposing the fallacies of the empiriocriticists' epistemological doctrine Lenin has in mind their aesthetic doctrines as well and that if the reflection theory is a cure for the former it is a cure for the latter as well. Finally, it is pointed out that Lenin's correspondence with Gorkij in the years 1907–1910 is directly related to his philosophical interests, because in that correspondence "He kept Gorkij informed about the Marxists' struggle against the Machists, patiently explained to him the meaning of the two opposing views and helped him to overcome his god-building illusions".[43] Again by implication, since Gorkij was an artist much admired by Lenin, it is said that in trying to persuade him of the pernicious nature of empiriocriticism, Lenin was hoping to convince Gorkij of the rectitude of the Marxist theory of knowledge in application to art. That Gorkij was supposed to have been so finally 'persuaded' is evidenced by his observations about the historical significance of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934.[44] It was due especially to Gorkij's influence that Ždanov later made the reflection theory the philosophical pillar of officially sanctioned artistic practice in the Soviet Union.

Despite the eventual auto-criticism by aestheticians of their 'vulgar' interpretation of the reflection theory, the fortunes of this theory have continually prospered. The vulgar interpretations were tied almost exclusively to texts in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. The renewed interest in *Philosophical Notebooks*, pushed into the background during the Stalin era, brought to light the remark by Lenin that "Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but it also creates it". This remark was interpreted in the light of Pisarev's observation, quoted with approval by Lenin, in *What Is To Be Done*? that dreaming, fantasizing, was the stimulus for any activity, including

art.[45] Allowing that the artist goes beyond a mere reproduction of reality – which is all the reflection theory seemed to provide for – Lenin was now said to consider fantasy as a form of reflection which is tantamount to cognitive generalization steeped in emotions, as a penetration to the essential aspects of things in their relationship to the human will and emotions. In this sense artistic perception could be distinguished from ordinary sensible experience. This elaboration came to have particular significance when Marxist aestheticians in certain of the People's Democracies, Poland for example, responding to the winds of change following upon Stalin's death, began to put the earlier sanctioned views behind them with cries of relief. One Polish author, though openly admitting his earlier servility to the reflection doctrine, now spoke out against it as not only non-Marxist in character, but as an illicit interpretation foisted on Lenin by Ždanov.[46] The reaction was swift and unequivocal. Branding such views 'revisionist', Soviet writers rushed to the defense of orthodoxy stressing the texts on creative reflection alongside the usual reflection texts, accusing the revisionists in turn of wanting to return to a theory advocating art for art's sake, a theory which radically falsifies the cognitive and social functions of art.[47]

It is ironic, however, that some of the Soviet aestheticians, called on to produce orthodox defenses of Lenin, were themselves trying to work out the concept of the aesthetic in terms of Marx's concept of 'aesthetic appropriation of reality' through labor, especially in such a way as can be found in the manuscripts of 1844.[48] In fact, in the late fifties the views of the so-called '*obščestvenniki*' consisted of an effort to minimalize the reflection doctrine in favor of the Marxian concept of social practice as an activity transformative of the world and man. On the other hand,the opposition group, the '*prirodniki*', came, in their defense of orthodoxy, to rely increasingly on Lenin's attribution of the property of reflection to all forms of matter, and not just to consciousness. With time, many of these *prirodniki* broadened their methodological basis by employing the various quantitative 'exact methods' discussed briefly in the last chapter. Ju. Borev, a convinced societalist, complained that the naturists' turn to the exact sciences was an unreasoned defense of 'metaphysical materialism' in aesthetic theory.[49] Nevertheless, the multiple aspects of Lenin's reflection theory have not ceased to gain ground. During the celebration of Lenin's centenary in 1969–1970, great quantities of ink were spilled extolling Lenin's contributions to aesthetics, especially his reflection theory which has continued to be regarded as the philosophico-scientific foundation of all traditional and newer methods in aesthetic investigations. How some of these aspects were handled by the schools in opposition

in the late fifties and early sixties will be seen in more detail in the second part of this study.

2.3. PLEKHANOV

In comparison with the contributions of the 'classics' and Lenin to Soviet aesthetic doctrine, those of G. V. Plekhanov are far more extensive and systematic. In contrast to their random and haphazard remarks, Plekhanov's views are set forth in a series of shorter and longer writings explicitly devoted to the classic problems of aesthetics from a Marxist point of view. His more important writings in this regard include: 'Literaturnye vzgljady V. G. Belinskogo' (V. G. Belinskij's Literary Views, 1897), 'Estetičeskaja teorija N. G. Černyševskogo' (N. G. Černyševskij's Aesthetic Theory, 1897), *Pisma bez adresa* [Unaddressed Letters, 1899–1900], *Francuzskaja dramatičeskaja literatura i francuzskij živopis XVIII veka s točki zrenija sociologii* [French Dramatic Literature and French Painting from the Standpoint of Sociology, 1905], 'Proletarskoje dviženie i buržuaznoe iskusstvo' [The Proletarian Movement and Bourgeois Art, 1905], *Iskusstvo i obščestvennaja žizn'* [Art and Social Life 1912–1913].

In all of his studies Plekhanov consistently employed the methodological directives of historical materialism, thereby in principle proving, in the eyes of Soviet aestheticians, the fruitfulness of Marxist theory in its application to art. Moreover, like Lenin after him, Plekhanov is said to have been able to concretize a series of Marx's and Engels' own views which at the time were still unknown, buried in the archives of the German Social Democratic Party, but which once published confirmed the validity of his own research. Since Marx's and Engels' aesthetic views were not extensively explored until the thirties, Plekhanov was considered to have been the founder of Marxist aesthetic theory, so much so that, during the twenties, the slogan 'for a Plekhanovite orthodoxy' symbolized in the eyes of some genuine Marxist doctrine.[50]

Yet, despite this seemingly excellent appraisal, Plekhanov's influence on the course of Soviet aesthetics has been quite marginal, being usually limited to a recognition of his role as an important Russian Marxist precursor who 'understood' much that is essential in aesthetic theory. There is no mystery in this, given the fact that, on the one hand, Plekhanov and Lenin came to be at odds on political, philosophical and artistic issues, and, on the other hand, that Plekhanov was appropriated during the twenties and thirties by numerous sparring factions in the question of the essence of socialist literature, most

of which factions were finally condemned at the time of the promulgation of Socialist Realism.

Philosophically, Lenin's theory of reflection had been designed to counter, among several theories, Plekhanov's theory of hieroglyphs, a theory that Lenin explicitly repudiated in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Politically, Plekhanov's Menshevism was probably more insufferable to Lenin than his theoretical, philosophical errors. It is not unusual to run across periodizations of Plekhanov's career according to which everything he said and did after 1903, the year of the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks of the Social Democratic Party, is tainted by Menshevism. The major consequence of this political heresy is that Plekhanov is accused of denying the principle of party-mindedness, the pillar of orthodox Leninism, and of falling into 'objectivism'. As it was, however, Lenin continued to have a very high regard for his old master and colleague, a fact which may explain why Plekhanov was saved from the dustbin of Marxist-Leninist historiography. After the latter's death Lenin wrote:

> It is *impossible* to become an intelligent *real* communist without studying, precisely *studying*, all that Plekhanov wrote in philosophy, because that is the best there is in the whole international literature on Marxism.[51]

On aesthetic questions, Lenin and Plekhanov are said to be in opposition with regard to the gnoseological foundations of art, the principle of party-mindedness in application to aesthetic matters and a different, indeed contrasting, interpretation of L. Tolstoy.[52] Moreover, since Lenin criticized Plekhanov for an inadequate rendering and application of the dialectic in the strictly sociological studies, Plekhanov's aesthetic works are viewed by Soviet philosophers as embodying the same fault. In connection with the last criticism Plekhanov is frequently held partially responsible for the emergence of 'vulgar sociologism'.[53]

But for a while in the mid-twenties Plekhanov's additions to the doctrine of historical materialism had been of considerable importance to writers on art. The Plekhanovite orthodoxy advocated his five-point formulation of the materialist conception of history according to which social psychology, determined in part by economic relations and the interaction of the distinct ideologies, mediated between socio-political institutions and ideologies, and which meant that ideologies could not on the surface be regarded as directly caused, conditioned by the economic base.[54] But since the social psychology was defined as a perception of an individual's, an artist's position within the system of economic and social relationships, this apparently non-reductionist,

anti-causal view could be turned back on itself by critics who, in fact, accused it of being quite the contrary, a mechanistic reductionism. The environment determines the artist's position, the artist is closed in on this environment, hence every artist portrays his social reality truthfully. 'Art for art's sake' and 'utilitarian art' both reflected different environments: the first, equivalent to decadent art, reflected the 'disaccord' of the artist and art-lover with existing social conditions, while the second was an art which more or less passively explained the existing social conditions, usually in terms of the dominating, exploiting class.[55] In the light of the growing concern for the salient features of a new socialist art, Plekhanov was accused of 'objectivism', i.e. he failed to realize the significance of the principle of partymindedness, according to which the artist does have the task of creating, as it were, a certain disaccord between actual and historically inevitable reality in his art. Plekhanov's views were identified with those of the vulgar sociologists for whom art was not concerned with reality as such, who misrepresented the dialectic of base and superstructure, and who passively acquiesced to any social circumstances, seeking merely to establish the 'class equivalent' of every work of art. In stressing this last point, the sociologists of art neglected to add that, besides the search for the class equivalent, Plekhanov considered the investigation of the purely aesthetic, the formal moments of a work of art, a constitutive part of aesthetic analysis. In saying that the idea, the content of a work of art, must be translated out of artistic language into the language of sociology, Plekhanov referred to only the first of the 'two acts of criticism'.[56] The second, concerning the analysis of the formal aspects of an art work, was the analysis of its artistic attainments or perfections for and in themselves. Though at present Plekhanov has been rendered justice on this point by the Soviets, it is still maintained that, even if this second act of criticism is subordinate to the first, according to which content determines form, Plekhanov held two kinds of truths about art: those holding for art's insertion in a social context (the content) and those which were somehow beyond history (the form).[57]

Discussions of issues like the foregoing illustrate how today Soviet aestheticians both acknowledge and criticize Plekhanov's proposals. The problems that he raised are deemed to be central to Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, but with very few exceptions his resolutions of these problems are found to be inadequate and faulty.

First, we can briefly summarize what are considered important points of his work in aesthetic theory and, second, show how their formulation is, nevertheless, criticized.

– Plekhanov successfully applied the principles of historical materialism to art: art is a form of social consciousness subordinated to the mechanisms of socio-historical development.

– He correctly posed the problem of the origin and genesis of the aesthetic sense and art; for Plekhanov a utilitarian relation to reality precedes the aesthetic relation; labor precedes beauty and establishes it. "But this does not mean that . . . the utilitarian point of view falls together with (*sovpadaet*) the aesthetic [point of view]. [. . .] Utility comes to be known by reason; beauty by a contemplative activity. The domain of the former [is] calculation (*rasčet*); the domain of the latter – instinct".[58]

– Historically, superior socio-economic formations distance art from the economic base by a series of intermediary forms, although in the last analysis the class struggle is responsible for artistic content.

– Plekhanov stressed the primacy of art's social significance, its contentfulness, truthfulness and ideativeness (*idejnost'*).

– Criteria of artistic evaluation consist in the correspondence of form to content and the examination of content to discover whether its ideas are true or false in relation to social reality.

– Aesthetics does not impose norms on artistic creation: its function is to evaluate art sociologically and formally in order to understand its place in social life (utilitarian art vs. art for art's sake).

Soviet aestheticians have no argument with the first point. On the second point, however, Plekhanov is accused of making concessions to Kant and Darwin: it would seem that despite the dependence of the aesthetic sense on social practice, by being called contemplative it is conceived to be disinterested in Kant's sense, and by being attached to instinct it is biologically and not historically conditioned. With regard to the next three points concerning Plekhanov's interpretation of the situation of art in relation to the socio-economic formation, we have already shown above how Plekhanov is held largely responsible for the aberrations of the vulgar sociologists. He is charged with interpreting historical materialism in such a way as to make it easy to consider art as a passive illustration of social thought at different periods and to reject the cultural heritage, a criticism formulated in the language of Socialist Realism. As a result of this critique there is a certain ambivalence with regard to the last point of Plekhanov's contributions. Socialist Realism requires of the artist that his art express the ideals of the progressive revolutionary class in the process of transforming reality. On the other hand, it is agreed with Plekhanov that aestheticians are not expected to impose norms, canons on an artist, though he is expected to recognize the

scientific nature of their statements. These seemingly contrary avenues of approach to art are combined by Socialist Realism in the principles of classness, peopleness and above all partymindedness. Aesthetic truths, so to speak, are not divorced from social life; an artist produces a 'good' or 'successful' work of art when its intentions do not contradict the truths of aesthetic theory worked out in conjunction with an examination of social life. For neglecting the historical relativity of social life, Plekhanov is accused of 'objectivism' in his aesthetics.

2.4. RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATS

The thinkers, writers, political agitators grouped under this heading owe their prominence largely to the praise bestowed on them by Lenin, but also by Plekhanov and other early Russian Marxists. Collectively and individually they are considered to be forerunners of Marxism in Russia. They are looked upon as having developed materialist standpoints that came closer to Marxism than any earlier proposed materialist doctrine in Russia or elsewhere. But they were unable to see their way to a consistently scientific materialism, falling short in varying degrees of the truths of Marxist theory, especially historical materialism. As far as their aesthetic views are concerned, Soviet interpretations have regarded their doctrines as an integrated whole, but one which suffers for the same reasons that all of their work suffers – for having failed to ascend to the heights of Marxist science. There can be no doubt, however, that contemporary Marxist-Leninist aesthetics is overwhelmingly obligated to the views of these nineteenth-century social and political malcontents.

The fourth volume of the *Istorija estetiki* [History of Aesthetics] identifies eleven revolutionary democrats in the following chronological order: V. G. Belinskij (1810–1848), A. I. Herzen (1812–1870), N. P. Ogarev (1813–1877), N. G. Černyševskij (1828–1889), N. A. Dobroljubov (1836–1861), N. A. Nekrasov (1821–1878), M. E. Saltykov-Ščedrin (1826–1889), D. I. Pisarev (1841–1868), M. A. Antonovič (1835–1918), N. V. Šelgunov (1824–1891), M. L. Mixajlov (1829–1865).[59] Of these, however, three receive special attention, because they are considered to be the more important leaders of this general orientation of Russian socio-political and aesthetic thought: Belinskij, Černyševskij, and Dobroljubov.

According to Lenin's periodization of the Russian revolutionary movement in the nineteenth century,[60] Belinskij had conceived the embryo of the populist movement of the 1860s, while Černyševskij and Dobroljubov were considered by Lenin as the foremost 'enlighteners' of the second, pre-Marxist

period, i.e. the bourgeois-democratic revolution before 1895. Although Černyševskij's place is already assured thanks to Lenin's rapt praise for his work it should be noted in addition that Engels praised Černyševskij and Dobroljubov as 'Russian socialist Lessings', while Marx is reported to have gone so far as to learn Russian in order to study Černyševskij's writings.

All the revolutionary democrats, but especially the three singled out for special attention, are regarded as spiritual fathers of Socialist Realism.[61] Beginning with Belinskij, these writers advocated a civic minded art, considering art not only as a means of education but also as a judge of reality. Given this program, the emergence and growth of critical realism was a necessary step. It was a realism which did not rest content with passively reproducing the world; it was a critically oriented search for the essence of social life in the light of higher human ideals not yet realized. To a man they despised 'art for art's sake' which espoused a Kantian disinterestedness of the aesthetic sense for the affairs of ordinary life. For them art was art only when it was used as a channel, a means of communication for social and political ideals. In this sense, their artistic realism is said to be marked by tendentiousness, propaganda and partymindedness insofar as they were concerned with the lot of the suffering masses. To the extent that true art was to be conceived in terms of higher human ideals they subordinated purely aesthetic issues to moral, i.e. in their case, utilitarian questions. Even though non-Marxist scholars[62] suggest that many of the ideas of the revolutionary democrats have been misrepresented by their Soviet admirers, it is evident that the theorists of Socialist Realism were able to find many of their leading concepts in the works of the revolutionary democrats.

Where points of aesthetic theory are concerned it is astonishing how much has been credited by Soviet authors to Belinskij and Černyševskij despite what the Soviets consider their general 'methodological' weakness. Western commentators look on this influence in a different manner. According to certain among them, it depends on a fallacious identification of Belinskij and Černyševskij in the light of the doctrine of the latter, whom Planty-Bonjour regards unequivocally as one of the progenitors of dialectical materialism.[63] The Soviets assign Belinskij the credit for founding the critical artistic realism that Černyševskij so brilliantly continued to employ. This Soviet interpretation overlooks the fact that Belinskij's famous definition of artistic cognition as a thinking in images is Hegelian in origin and formulation, involving thereby a philosophical attitude that is wholly inimical to Marxist-Leninists. In turn, Černyševskij was strongly critical of Hegel, but he expressed his criticism in terms of Feuerbachian philosophy, as a result of which he tended to

consider art the mirror of man's sensuous contemplation of reality, a position which is also displeasing to orthodox dialectical materialism. The Soviet interpretation consists, therefore, of an amalgamation of the best from both thinkers: thinking in images means grasping what is general, essential in an individual and depicting it in sensuous-concrete form, the latter being, according to Černyševskij's Feuerbachianism, the sole reality for man.

Besides those already mentioned, Černyševskij's contributions to Soviet aesthetics are too numerous to deal with adequately here. In the first place, his dissertation for his Master's degree *Estetičeskie otnošenija iskusstva k dejstvitel'nosti* [The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality][64] is a kind of model for aestheticians who composed their treatises in the spirit and style of Černyševskij's work. Only after having decided whether or not certain aesthetic 'categories', viz. the beautiful, tragic and comic, adhere to reality does Černyševskij – and many Soviet authors after him – pronounce on the aesthetic 'specificity' of art and its precise relation to reality. Consequently, Černyševskij directly or indirectly commits himself to settling – though in his case not very clearly or explicitly – a number of philosophical questions without which speculations about aesthetic 'categories' would remain woefully deficient (e.g. the ontological status of beauty as either a property of things, of experiences, or of both).

Černyševskij 'bequeathed' a definition of beauty to Soviet aestheticians over which they have not ceased to ponder and debate with one another. "Beauty", said Černyševskij, "is life"; "that in which we perceive life is beautiful"; "an object is beautiful inasmuch as it reveals life or awakens the awareness of life". But, adds the great 'enlightener', significantly, "The beautiful is that in which we can see life as it ought, in our understanding, to be . . .".[65] Casting about looking for authorities, the aestheticians, who in the middle to late fifties and early sixties participated in the debate on the nature of the aesthetic, made use of the inherent ambiguity in Černyševskij's doctrine to support their divergent theories. One group, the *prirodniki*, interpreted Černyševskij's views in the spirit of the evolutionary metaphysics of dialectical materialism. External living nature contained aesthetic qualities which are independent of any human interaction with it, the reference to human understanding being but an affirmation that man, the pinacle of nature's development, 'reflected' (in the ontological sense of Lenin's theory) the laws of this development and could evaluate everything 'as it ought to be', according to the 'laws of beauty' inscribed in 'living' matter. The opponents of this view, the *obščestvenniki*, were also able to make good use of the ambiguities in Černyševskij's position. Given Černyševskij's social concerns, 'life',

they thought, referred exclusively to human life, either directly or indirectly, in that certain external objects recalled, mirrored, provoked reflections about the value for man of human life, i.e. social life. Nature was otherwise bereft of aesthetic qualities, which at best were imposed on it by social man who envisaged his present circumstances in the light of how they should be, i.e. in the light of a human ideal of a man emancipated from hunger and suffering of every kind. This interpretation leaned heavily on Černyševskij's explicit conjunction of aesthetic and utilitarian values, i.e. values for man as social man.[66]

Whatever Černyševskij's unwitting contribution to the sides in this controversy, certain of his views nevertheless remained unacceptable to Marxist-Leninist aestheticians. In particular his ideas on the nature of art have appeared to be totally unacceptable. Černyševskij defended realism in art against critical encroachments by such luminary aestheticians as Vischer. In his zeal, however, Černyševskij arrived at some strange conclusions. Artistic imagination does not rival, never mind surpass, what is contained in reality. Imagination is no more than a faint copy of an infinitely more perfect reality, aesthetically speaking. Hence art does not have the task of perfecting reality, of creating a beauty that reality does not have. Indeed the aim of art is not to create beauty at all, but to fix in its particular form everything that interests man, that has a rapport with his social life and the positive values on which it should rest. In this sense art clarifies and evaluates life; art does not merely copy, for in so doing it would lose its significance.[67] Although Soviet aestheticians never accepted Černyševskij's denigration of art, his lack of concern for the aesthetic specificity of art in favor of its social, anthropological function adversely affected their own efforts.

Černyševskij's anthropology was also unacceptable: according to the Soviets, the ideal according to which man judged his life was not merely that of Černyševskij's 'normal' man, the characteristics of the species to be contemplated in their static perfection, but, quite on the contrary, the ensemble of social relations historically changing on the basis of the development of production. In short, Černyševskij's doctrine was, according to the Soviets, bereft of a *prise de conscience* of the importance of the class struggle in the shaping of man.

PART II

CHAPTER III

THE AESTHETIC: CHRONOLOGY OF THE 1956–1966 DISCUSSIONS AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0. GENERAL SURVEY OF THE *ESTETIČESKOE* DISCUSSION

What is today commonly referred to by Soviet aestheticians as the *estetičeskoe* discussion took place during the decade 1956–1966. As stated in the Introduction and in Chapter I (1.2) the *estetičeskoe* discussion was the classic Soviet controversy about the philosophical foundations of aesthetics. Not only did this discussion thematize long-neglected but important questions (e.g. the nature of the beautiful), but it drew into the open some of the essential difficulties in conceptualizing aesthetic phenomena in Marxist-Leninist terms and categories.

In the present chapter we shall first identify the major schools of thought during the period in question here, briefly characterize each and list the most representative authors and their works. The second section of the chapter is devoted to the philosophical framework – the essential concepts and questions formulated on their basis and not just the dogmatic theses of the Marxist-Leninist world-view – that Soviet authors seemed to be working with when they tackled the problem of the aesthetic at this time. This analysis will also be the moment to mention the possibility of conflicting uses of this framework in interpreting the aesthetic phenomenon.

N. Tasalov reviewed the discussion in 'Desjat' let problemy "estetičeskogo" (1956–1966) [Ten Years of the "Aesthetic" Problem 1956–1966]; M. S. Kagan in the second edition (1971) of his *Lekcii po marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* [Lessons in Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics] speaks of the three groups or schools participating in the controversy: the societalists (*obščestvenniki*), naturists (*prirodniki*), and one isolated 'psychologist' (i.e. subjectivist) whose 1966 article, *Ešče raz o prirode Krasoty* [Once Again on the Nature of the Beautiful] incited the last polemical outburst over questions troubling aestheticians in the foregoing decade.

Strictly speaking, however, the bulk of the discussion took place through 1963, after which time the rate of frequency of publications devoted to the *estetičeskoe* problem abated considerably. After 1963 some of the societalists began to undergo a change of heart, not in the sense that they embraced the views of their severest critics, the naturists, but in the sense that they

abandoned some the presuppositions that they shared with the naturists. Criticism of both sides in the controversy had begun to appear here and there in isolated articles before 1963. But V. P. Tugarinov's study of 1960, *O cennostjach žizni i kul'tury* [On the Values of Life and Culture], instigated, though did not directly give rise to, a new conception which received its first detailed formulation in 1963 in the first edition of Kagan's study mentioned above. The brief but intense polemic in 1966 incited by A. Nujkin's psychologistic views – an unusual exception to a traditionally objectivist approach to the aesthetic – was, in fact, a throwback to a stage of the discussion that had been superseded by 1963.[1]

3.1. INITIAL FORMULATIONS

It is significant that the discussion about the nature of the aesthetic got off to a start in 1956, the year of liberation from the 'cult of the personality' and the dogmatism attached to that cult. Of great importance was the publication in that year of Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' early writings in one volume (*Iz rannyx proizvedenii*, M., 1956) containing the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844. With time the controversy between the societalists and naturists came to revolve to a large degree around the proper interpretation of certain key texts in Marx's *Manuscripts*. For, in point of fact, the societalists were those who, supporting themselves on certain texts in Marx's manuscripts having to do with the 'humanization' of nature in social labor, asserted that human activity understood in this fashion was precisely aesthetic in essence, and that, consequently, it is absurd to maintain the concept of a natural, extra-human beauty. This standpoint ran contrary to the traditional (although inexplicit) Soviet view, according to which the paradigm of what was aesthetic was natural beauty, existing independently of man and requiring a strictly objective cognition in order to be appreciated. When the societalist position crystallized, defenders of the traditional view came to be known as the 'naturists' (*prirodniki*). As will be shown in greater detail in the last chapter, the naturists' attitude to the young Marx was less than enthusiastic.

In 1956 three authors published studies destined to have great significance for the ensuing period. A. I. Burov published *Estetičeskaja suščnost' iskusstva* [The Aesthetic Essence of Art], foreshadowing the societalist position to some degree, but important especially for its break with the prevailing mode of aesthetic thinking during the preceding Stalinist period. N. A. Dmitrieva wrote *Voprosy estetičeskogo vospitanija* [Questions of Aesthetic Education], which took up most of the essential arguments of the later naturists. Finally,

L. N. Stolovič published his ground-breaking article 'Ob estetičeskich svojstvach dejstvitel'nosti' [On the Aesthetic Properties of Reality] in *Voprosy filosofii*, an article which took up the main arguments for what was to become the societalist position. To some extent Stolovič had been preceded by V. V. Vanslov who in the preceding year had written an article entitled 'Suščestvuet li prekrasnoe ob'ektivno?' [Does the Beautiful Exist Objectively], and followed it in 1956 with a monograph *Soderžanie i forma v iskusstve* [Content and Form in Art]. The difference between the two authors was that, whereas Stolovič was explicitly concerned with the nature of the aesthetic as such from the societalist perspective, Vanslov occupied himself with key aesthetic categories, the beautiful in particular, from the societalist perspective. In the main, however, the question of the aesthetic came to be almost indissolubly linked with the analysis of the category of the beautiful, because the aesthetic was supposed to receive exemplary expression in that category, all others being subordinate to it.

Burov's book took up a position at mid-point between Dmitrieva's and Stolovič's studies. Like Burov, Dmitrieva inscribed herself in the long-standing Soviet tradition of emulating Černyševskij on aesthetic matters. But where Dmitrieva took Černyševskij's remarks about the beauty of life to signify nature's beauty, Burov moved toward an interpretation which ascribed aesthetic significance to nature only in so far as it had significance for man. In this sense Burov stood closer to Stolovič for whom aesthetic properties were the result of the activity of social man in nature, a theory which broke with the Černyševskij tradition and turned instead to the newly available texts of the young Marx. Burov's book contained virtually all of the issues later dealt with by the participants in the controversy over the nature of the aesthetic. It is ironic that no one found the book satisfactory as it stood, as it was submitted to criticism time and again.

3.11. The Societalists

From the beginning the societalists had the momentum in the discussion on their side, thanks to the novelty of their views. Later, in the early sixties, they were increasingly on the defensive, not only because their aesthetic theory was found lacking, but also because they were judged to have deviated from philosophical orthodoxy.

The most important of the societalists were L. N. Stolovič, V. V. Vanslov, Ju. Borev, and S. S. Gol'dentrixt, all of whom published heatedly debated studies before 1960. Of these writers, L. N. Stolovič earned pride of place as the most controversial societalist. Besides numerous articles, Stolovič wrote

two books in the period under consideration, the first of which has the status of a 'classic': *Estetičeskoe v dejstvitel'nosti i v iskusstve* [The Aesthetic in Reality and in Art, 1959] and *Predmet estetiki* [The Object of Aesthetics, 1961]. V. V. Vanslov wrote a full-length study on the beautiful, *Problema prekrasnogo* [The Problem of the Beautiful, 1957], a study explicitly calling for closer attention to be paid to the early writings of Marx, especially to the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. Ju. Borev, an unflagging defender of the societalist standpoint, even to this day, has been the most prolific writer in the societalist camp, producing four works in the period, most of them devoted to the aesthetic categories: *O komičeskom* [On the Comic, 1957], *Osnovyne estetičeskie kategorii* [The Fundamental Aesthetic Categories, 1960], *O tragičeskom* [On the Tragic, 1961] and *Vvedenie v estetiku* [Introduction to Aesthetics, 1965], as well as numerous articles, in particular, 'Metod i sistema estetiki' [On the Method and System of Aesthetics, 1964]. Finally, S. S. Gol'dentrixt earned the reputation of being the most radical of the societalists, writing an essay entitled *Ob estetičeskom osvoenii dejstvitel'nosti* [On the Aesthetic Appropriation of Reality, 1959], an essay on art in the collective volume *Formy obščestvennogo soznanija* [Forms of Social Consciousness, 1960] and later a monograph *O prirode estetičeskogo tvorčestva* [On the Nature of Aesthetic Creativity, 1966].

Of considerable importance was the first volume of *Voprosy estetiki* [Questions of Aesthetics, 1958], which contained several articles by authors who put forth arguments similar to those of the societalists.[2] 'Problemy estetiki v "ekonomičesko-filosofskich rukopisach" K. Marksa' [Problems of Aesthetics in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of K. Marx], by L. N, Pažitnov, was the first analysis of the young Marx's reputed aesthetics since M. Liftšic published his pioneering but neglected study in 1933. Pažitnov published a full-length book study of the *Manuscripts* in 1960 under the title *U istokov revoljucionnogo perevorota v filosofii* [At the Origins of a Revolutionary Transformation in Philosophy].

Although numerous books and articles continued to appear with regularity after 1961, they were highly repetitious and partisan, siding with and lengthily expounding the views of preferred authors. As such the societalist position is more or less completely represented in each of the works cited above, differences being inessential as far as the main drift of the societalist argument is concerned. Only Gol'dentrixt stands out with a position that differs in one respect from the other societalists; but by 1961 Stolovič reduced the distance separating Gol'dentrixt from the other societalists by moving in the direction of the former's point of view. The remaining authors, Borev in particular,

repeated themselves monotonously, languishing as a result in a certain dogmatism and sterile formulas.

3.12. The Naturists

Because the position that came to be known as the *prirodnik* position, or *prirodničestvo*, represented a much more traditional and staid approach to key themes in Soviet aesthetics, it was never the self-conscious school that the societialist position became. When it finally took the offensive, representative authors frequently spilled more ink hurling invectives at their opponents than in carefully developing a viable alternative theory. Most commonly, they remained content with generalities or doctrinaire views from dialectical and historical materialism, dressed up in aesthetic terminology.

The leading naturists were: N. A. Dmitrieva, A. Egorov, V. S. Kornienko, G. Pospelov, I. B. Astaxov. Besides the book mentioned above, N. A. Dmitrieva wrote the pamphlet *O prekrasnom* [On the Beautiful, 1960], and *Izobraženie i slovo* [Representation and Word, 1962]. Dmitrieva, however, never took an active part in the polemic against the societalists. In this she differed from the others, who explicitly took up the cudgels against them. A. Egorov, member of the editorial board of *Kommunist*, warned as early as 1957 that authors like Vanslov risked falling into subjectivism.[3] In 1959 he published *Iskusstvo i obščestvennaja žizn'* [Art and Social Life], setting out the differences opposing the two conceptions. But the bulk of the works representing this position began to appear in the sixties: G. Pospelov's *O prirode iskusstva* [On the Nature of Art, 1960] and later *Estetičeskoe i xudožestvennoe* [The Aesthetic and the Artistic, 1965]; V. S. Kornienko *O suščnosti estetičeskogo poznanija* [On the Essence of Aesthetic Cognition, 1962]; I. B. Astaxov *Čto takoe estetika*? [What is Aesthetics? 1962], *Soderžanie i forma xudožestvennogo proizvedenija* [The Content and Form of a Work of Art, 1963], *Iskusstvo i problema prekrasnogo* [Art and the Problem of Beauty, 1963].

The societalists indisputably had the edge on the naturists both in the complexity of their arguments and the number of themes touched upon. As mentioned above, the aesthetic categories were the subject of extensive treatment by the societalists (Borev, Vanslov and parts of Stolovič's studies) from the beginning of the discussion. The naturists made do with spotty, unsystematic analyses (e.g. Astaxov) until the mid-sixties when N. I. Krjukovskij published *Logika krasoty* [Logic of Beauty, 1965], which met with more criticism than approbation. More recently, Kornienko tried his hand at the question, *O zakonax krasoty, K voprosu o suščnosti estetičeskix javlenij v dejstvitel'nosti i v iskusstve* [On the Laws of Beauty. Toward the Question of

the Essence of Aesthetic Phenomena in Reality and Art, 1970]. But by that time, however, many of the early societalists were correcting the initial weaknesses of their position or developing a new outlook altogether.

Like their opponents, the naturists were highly repetitious in their works. With time they, more than the societalists, turned to the various formal and exact methods of aesthetic analysis that began to emerge in the early sixties.

3.13. The Polemic

In 1961, Stolovič's book *Predmet estetiki*, seems to have been the spark for an explicit confrontation of the two conceptions, a confrontation that raged in the years 1961–1963. Prestigious journals like *Voprosy filosofii, Filosofskie nauki* and *Voprosy literatury* decided to open their pages to authors interested in taking a position vis-à-vis one camp or another. Under the rubric 'Aesthetics and Life', *Voprosy literatury* published a series of articles from the end of 1960 throughout 1961, ostensibly devoted to debating the question of how to understand man's aesthetic relation to reality. In effect, the discussions centered on the specificity of art, i.e. whether art had a specific object, and the status of the category of beauty. From this series, two articles in particular were the object of repeated commentaries, both of them representing extreme naturism, viz. K. Zelinskij's 'O krasote' (On Beauty, 1960), and V. Romanenko's 'Real'nost' krasoty v prirode' (The Reality of Beauty in Nature, 1962). Since *Voprosy literatury* draws most of its talents from art critics and specialists in the *Kunstwissenschaften*, the more philosophically oriented had to turn to the philosophical journals. From 1961 to 1963 numerous frequently repetitious, tedious and often crude positions appeared on the pages of the philosophical journals.[4] The prevailing tendency was to rebuke the societalists, especially L. N. Stolovič, who reiterated his theories in articles written in 1961 and 1962. The articles written against the societalists provide one of the best glimpses of the naturist position, especially on the question of the aesthetic properties of reality. An editorial in *Voprosy filosofii* was to observe later that the entire discussion had gravitated to the issue of the existence of aesthetic properties or qualities in nature, such that other essential questions were virtually neglected.[5]

At the end of 1962 and in the early part of 1963 the philosophical journals conducted summarizations and evaluations of the discussions.[6] If, on the whole, both societalists and naturists were berated for their 'scholasticism', 'academism', divorce from the world of concrete artistic practice, etc., the evaluations tended to be rather more severe with the societalist viewpoint. It is instructive to see how these more or less official disapprovals affected the

output of the societalists: with few exceptions the most important among them turned either to other formulations of their ideas or remained silent on the question of the aesthetic altogether. Because they were judged to be somehow closer and truer to the goals of building socialist society, the naturists were able to cultivate the field for a short time almost without opposition, as has been documented above.

3.14. Subsequent Transitions and Developments

By 1964 a collective volume appeared entitled *Estetičeskoe* [The Aesthetic] which undertook primarily a systematization and critique of the societalist position trying to explain its shifts and its contradictions. A later volume, *Priroda i funkcii estetičeskogo* [The Nature and Functions of the Aesthetic, 1968] also dealt systematically with the problem of man's aesthetic relation to the world, though now from the point of view of some of the new research in progress. When M. S. Kagan's *Lekcii* appeared in 1963, they bore a criticism of both earlier standpoints, proposing instead a relationist or dialectical theory which considers the aesthetic as basically an axiological category uniting the subject and the object in a determinate fashion.[7] In this Kagan took up ideas expressed earlier by V. P. Tugarinov in the aforementioned book from 1960 and the articles 'Krasota kak cennost' ' [Beauty as a Value 1963]. By 1965 a debate was under way about the so-called 'problem of values' in Marxist-Leninist philosophy, a debate that gave rise to a symposium, the materials of which were edited in a volume entitled *Problema cennosti v marksistskoj filosofii* [The Problem of Value in Marxist Philosophy, 1966]. Among others, the volume contained substantial contributions from aestheticians (L. N. Stolovič, M. S. Kagan, A. G. Xarčev, N. Z. Korotkov).[8] From the beginning of this new controversy, Stolovič was opposed to the 'relationist' theory of the aesthetic, although he was in favor of cultivating the axiological aspect of the aesthetic. His later study *Priroda estetičeskoj cennosti* [The Nature of Aesthetic Value, 1972] may be compared with O. G. Drobnickij's book *Mir oživšich predmetov. Problema cennosti i marksistskaja filosofija* [The World of Vitalized Objects. The Problem of Value in Marxist Philosophy, 1967].

3.2. THE PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE *ESTETIČESKOE* DISCUSSION

As was made clear in the first chapter, Marxist-Leninist aesthetics has always stood in the shadow of dialectical and historical materialism. The range of

problems dealt with as well as the number of possible approaches and solutions were always inscribed within the categories and models of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in general. Even though they had liberated themselves from the shortcomings of gnoseologism and sociologism, Soviet aestheticians still had no other way of coping with aesthetic phenomena than by employing the doctrine invoked in support of these aberrations. It can be fairly said that their investigations consisted not of empirical analyses but largely of conceptual constructions carried out in the light of the models afforded by one aspect or another of their general philosophy of matter, social theory and philosophy of man. In reality, therefore, much of the debate over the questions of the aesthetic revolved around interpretations of their philosophical doctrine.

As will be shown in more detail below, the main framework features of the debate about the nature of the aesthetic were the following:

(a) the cognitional bias of Soviet aesthetics, philosophically interpreted as epistemological realism and codified in the reflection doctrine of knowledge;

(b) materialism, both as a metaphysical monism and evolutionism, whereby the Soviets situated the aesthetic among the qualitatively diverse yet interconnected phenomena of the material world;

(c) historism, according to which the socio-cultural situation of mankind is a product of human activity. (In this sense of the term, historism does not refer to a 'method' of exposition and investigation, as described in a previous chapter.)

3.21. The Essential Questions

Much is revealed about the philosophical background of the *estetičeskoe* discussion by the questions that constituted the core of the problematic. Not only the formulation of the questions, but their interior logic, i.e. their interconnection, demonstrates that Soviet aestheticians attacked their problem from a wholly defined perspective. The catalogue of questions set out below is constructed here; no one writer systematically enumerated and formulated them in this fashion and not all the participants in the discussion devoted equal attention to the issues they raise. Nevertheless, it is certain that these questions represent the stock of problems to which Soviet aestheticians, with few exceptions, turned their attention in the period after 1956.

(1) How is art distinct from science? – according to its 'form' (i.e. its manner of perceiving reality) or according to its 'content' (the object which it cognizes)?

(2) What is the 'specific' object of art? – some domain of reality or reality as a whole seen from a particular angle?

(3) What is it that gives the 'specific' object of art its peculiarly 'aesthetic' character? Is the 'aesthetic' a quality or property adhering to certain things, or is it a relation of a particular kind of one thing to another in which one or both *relata* play essential roles?

(4) Is there more than one type of aesthetic quality, property or relation? If so, how many are there and what do they all have in common? What determines that a given object or situation is characterized by one or more of these at any given time?

(5) What is the nature of the aesthetic attitude of the subject? How does the aesthetic attitude differ from the subject's other attitudes to reality? Does the aesthetic attitude have anything in common with these other attitudes?

(6) What is the nature of the relationship of the aesthetic attitude to the aesthetic object? Is the subject (recipient and artist) passively or actively attuned to the aesthetic object?

(7) What is the nature of the relationship of the aesthetic attitude to art? Does art derive from the aesthetic attitude or does the aesthetic attitude spring from artistic activity? In general, what is primary, artistic activity or contemplation of some kind of aesthetic object?

(8) Does art have an autonomous aesthetic essence or does the aesthetic substance of art derive from its specific object?

(9) If art has a distinct content, does it merely represent the specific object or is there a difference between artistic content and the object of art?

(10) What are the criteria for distinguishing true from false, good from bad art?

Questions (1) through (4) are the most essential ones. Of these the first two motivated the *estetičeskoe* discussion and lent it a critical note vis-à-vis the earlier periods. They had to do with the so-called 'specificity of art' (*specifika iskusstva*). The nature of the problem gives away the Soviet perspective. Art belongs to the family of man's 'relations to reality', and although it shares with them a certain fundamental orientation, it must have either a specific referent or specific tasks or both in order not to be deprived of its specific, i.e. aesthetic character. However, since art is a relation of man to reality it must be first determined whether it is possible that something in reality determines the specificity of art before its situation in an otherwise aesthetically neutral reality is considered. It is a further question (8 and 9) whether the 'content' of art is or is not identical with the 'object' of art. For the time being the important task consists in establishing the reasons why something in reality is or is not aesthetic and what in general the aesthetic is, if it turned out that it takes more than one form.

Soviet aestheticians are unabashedly essentialistic in this regard. A typical question that might have been asked by any one of them takes the following form. "What is common to the singing of a nightingale and to the magnanimous deed of a man, to a beautiful architectural structure and to a sunset?"[9] All of these phenomena produce the same aesthetic reactions, viz. the 'sensation of beauty'. Specific sensations or feelings are also called forth by the qualities designated by the names 'ugly', 'sublime', 'base', 'tragic', 'comic', 'tragicomic', etc. Accordingly, the question naturally arises what all these qualities have in common if they are jointly referred to as 'aesthetic' qualities? Failure to discover the common essence would adversely affect all sides of aesthetic inquiry: the nature of the specific qualities ('Categories' in the language of Soviet aestheticians), the object and essence of art, the nature of artistic creativity, aesthetic education, etc., etc.

The intermediate questions above (5 through 7) generalize the issue of the specificity of art in relation to the general conditions to be satisfied by the recipient or the artist in order to grasp the aesthetic object, to stand in the 'aesthetic relation to reality'. Although the primary object for analysis is the aesthetic as such, the inquiry is complete only after the specific relation of the subject and the aesthetic object has been analyzed.

> From the standpoint of contemporary aesthetics those phenomena and objects of reality, those capacities of man are characterized as aesthetic which in one way or another are included in a particular specific relation of man to reality, viz. the aesthetic relation.[10]

The questions remain abstract so long as the nature of the aesthetic has not been clarified. Art may draw its aesthetic character from something outside of itself, but nothing requires the conclusion that the aesthetic is completely divorced from man, from his needs and activities. Consequently, the aesthetic attitude need not be necessarily conceived as a wholly passive, receptive attitude to some wholly external reality, nature. The genesis of a certain human need may have been the catalyst for examining the conditions under which the appropriate activity for the sake of satisfying this need is best carried on and the determination of the purpose this need has in human life. As with every relation man has to reality outside him, Marxism copes with these questions within the general dialectic of practice and knowledge, of human appropriation of reality and objective laws of nature.

The last question (10) raises the traditional problem of criteria of evaluation. However, the context of this question in Soviet aesthetics puts it in a different light. The value of art is to be judged, at least to some extent, by the

way in which it satisfies the conditions for the emergence of the aesthetic relation as such.

3.22 Three Basic Biases and Their Correlations

The perspective from which Soviet aestheticians saw and defined their tasks was delimited by philosophical canons belonging to dialectical and historical materialism.

In the first place, the argument in favor of a specific object of art reveals the overriding concern of Soviet aestheticians for the *cognitive* function of art and by extension of the aesthetic in general. Art has the obligation to instruct man in some fundamental way about the world. Art must be veridical and if it turns out that it has a wholly specific object its responsibility in this regard only doubles. V. V. Vanslov captures the tone of this argument.

> Aesthetic qualities belong to phenomena of reality itself, existing objectively outside and independently of man's perception of them. Their reflection in human consciousness . . . is . . . called man's aesthetic relation to reality.[11]

By the same token this bias bespeaks the constant Soviet mistrust of an autonomous 'aesthetic' function of art. 'Art for art's sake', 'formalism', 'modernism', etc. are just so many theories to be vilified because they substitute a chimerical aesthetic function for art's substantial cognitive relation to the world, which the Soviets are convinced these theories deny for the sake of a more or less explicit subjectivism. Finally, in more practical matters, this attitude also explains the Soviet prejudice for the so-called representational arts, the paradigm of all art forms.

It was mandatory for Soviet aestheticians to deal with the cognitive function of art by means of the reflection theory. Prescinding for the moment from a detailed analysis of the reflection theory in this context, it is sufficient to define it here as an epistemological realism supported by a sensationalist theory of perception. If, according to this classic conception, art is a specifically aesthetic cognition of real life, reality, the issue is whether it is possible only by coming to know what in reality is aesthetic. This at least would seem to be the most straightforward application of the general rule of the reflection theory that every form of cognition be a 'reflection', a 'copy' of its object. Stolovič writes that

> The importance of the question about the objectivity of aesthetic properties consists in the fact that it is a question of the criteria of the truth of one aesthetic perception and the falsehood of another.[12]

It was A. I. Burov who brought out the point, particularly in his critique of the 'vulgar gnoseologists'.[13] According to Burov, because the gnoseologists maintained that reality was aesthetically neutral, i.e. did not possess any intrinsic aesthetic features, they invevitably fell into 'formalism' and 'subjectivism' (ultimately for the Soviets these are but facets of the same perversion). They were forced to ascribe primary aesthetic significance to the process of aesthetic cognition itself. The 'vulgar gnoseologists' made the form (the mode of cognition, viz. the 'artistic image') and not the 'content' of art the end of artistic activity (a position identified by Burov as Kantian formalism.[14] Consequently, they could not establish the objective ties between content and form and were obliged to impose artistic form on any random content, usually chosen for its social and/or political value.

Burov's own position, which influenced the majority of the aestheticians after 1956 in orientation if not in its proposal, is implicitly contained in his critique. As it turns out, Burov was more of a gnoseologist than his predecessors. He required life, reality to possess intrinsic aesthetic features that art *qua* art, and not just any cognition whatsoever couched in an extraneous form could successfully capture. Instead of saying that a beautiful painting is to be explained in artistic terms, Burov seemed to be insisting that the beauty of the painting derives from the beauty of the object represented in the painting. Hence, as seen above, it became incumbent on aestheticians to examine why the represented object is beautiful (or aesthetic in some other form).

Burov thereby raised a problem that makes question (9) above of considerable importance. If art draws its aesthetic substance entirely from outside itself, how does art differ from that external object? In other words, is the artistic (*xudožestvennoe*) identical with or distinct from the aesthetic (*estetičeskoe*)? Burov's formulation of the cognitive dimension of art risked confusing the intrinsic aesthetic nature of art, what it is independently of whether or not it has a relation to something beyond its boundaries, and the aesthetic properties of non-artistic phenomena (e.g. natural beauty). After all, once the question about the specific object of art has been raised, it is impossible to abandon that perspective and still see in the way art sees, even if natural beauty is the concern of art. As if aware of the dangers of this gross mimetism, Burov came to distinguish the content of art *qua* art from the cognitional object of art; what art represents from case to case is not formally identical with what it really is about.[15] The problem is to determine what are the criteria for establishing the connections between concrete representations and the object of art.

A second closely related bias of Soviet aestheticians was philosophical materialism in two aspects: as a (mechanistic) *determinism* and as an *ontology*. The first aspect explains that, like consciousness in general, aesthetic consciousness too derives from and is determined by 'objective' being. In the *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj filosofii* it is affirmed that materialistic theories in aesthetics always affirmed the determining role of reality in the formation of the aesthetic consciousness.[16] The complementary thesis is that the object determining aesthetic consciousness is always a material object, i.e. it is one existing in space and time and subject to the influence of real causal forces. Taken literally, this overall materialism entails that the aesthetic consciousness is called into being because there is an objectively existing material object which is intrinsically aesthetic.

Eliminated from all possible consideration are views which put the object of art in the consciousness of the artist. Consciousness does not autonomously beget objects which it then proceeds to propose to itself as fitting objects of art. Soviet aestheticians have been wary in the extreme of the imagination (fantasy) as an autonomous source of artistic material. Nor do aesthetic objects share in the epiphenomenal status assigned by Soviet philosophy to consciousness and its manifold states. The aesthetic object is spatio-temporal; it does not possess mind-involving features and it is subject to the laws governing the material world.

But, as if to help Soviet aestheticians, Soviet ontology is ramified into two distinct though interconnected spheres, viz. the fundamental sphere of natural being and the derivative but relatively autonomous socio-human sphere. The aesthetic problematic as a whole has traditionally been ascribed in Marxism to the second sphere, falling for that reason under the aegis of histomat. Accordingly, it is not sufficient to assert that aesthetic consciousness reflects reality. Properly speaking, keeping with the classical formula of the materialist conception of history, the aesthetic consciousness as a form of social consciousness, reflects social being, or the ensemble of social and productive relations that determine a social whole at any given moment. In the words of the *Osnovy* "The object of the work of art is principally the life of society, in particular the domain of human relations".[17]

In the original Marxian theory, however, the theory of social consciousness exhibits a certain ambiguity. Its essential purpose was to expose the nature of ideological thought in class societies, a form of thought arising as a result of a division of labor between mental and manual labor and entailing the existence of an exploitative class. The Marxist is held to recognize that art and aesthetics arose in this primordial division of labor, but he risks a dangerous ambivalence

if he laconically asserts thereafter that art reflects social being. For such an assertion could be tantamount to the admission that art is essentially an ideological phenomenon, a presupposition that brought the vulgar sociologists more than their share of trouble. The object of art would be merely the system of social relations as seen by the artist, who always belongs to one of the major classes of a given socio-economic formation. The artist could necessarily perceive the object of art only in the light of the progressive or reactionary ideas of his class. Strictly speaking, he would not have the means of judging the truth or falsehood of these ideas. The Marxist theory of ideologies cannot therefore be taken as a complete answer to the questions posed here.

The search for the aesthetic seemed to require, therefore, a theory of the interpenetration of the natural and social spheres of material being. Soviet philosophy effects this unification by relying on the principle of practice, as the means whereby man transforms his environment, and himself. Along with the aforementioned cognitive and ontological features of the aestheticians' conceptual framework, what can be called a *historist* standpoint played an essential role throughout the *estetičeskoe* discussion.

According to the standard Marxist-Leninist arguments, practice is responsible for the emergence and development of the aesthetic sense. Thanks to practice

> . . . man's creative possibilities were perfected, thinking developed, the hand was perfected (*upražnjalas'*), the senses were differentiated, the urge for ornamentation, symmetry, rhythm and harmony were developed, the ability to isolate and reproduce objects and phenomena in images was worked out.[18]

Methodologically, the historist perspective must be complemented by a functionalist analysis which would clarify and explain the purpose and sense of the aesthetic sense in human life. This in fact is just another fashion of posing the question of the specificity of the aesthetic, in the context of the Marxist-Leninist world view.

Now here Marxism-Leninism draws a distinction between those human capacities designed to satisfy utilitarian needs and those affecting man's 'spiritual' needs. The essential point in this regard appears to be that, just as the needs are 'specific', distinct and different from one another, so too must the objects of the given needs be 'specific', i.e. qualitatively distinct. The aesthetic sense emerged and developed in response to man's urge for beauty, an urge which was the 'product' of human history. What remained to be clarified was the status of the objects that 'satisfy' man's different needs. It

might be that the aesthetic sense finds its fulfillment exclusively in objects created by man, e.g. in works of art. But, as we have seen, Soviet aestheticians were concerned about the *essence* of the quality that attached to the object as well as to the experience, viz. the aesthetic qualities as it was of art and the aesthetic consciousness.

In other words, although they accepted the historicity of the aesthetic sense in the function of human spiritual growth, they had still to explain what the aesthetic was and 'where' it came from, what explained its specificity. Marxism-Leninism seems to afford only two alternative possibilities. Either that quality was of human origin, just like the need for which it constituted the fulfillment, or else it preexisted man's need, and was in fact discovered by him in the natural world in the course of his development and perfection through practice. The basic underlying question here had to do with the nature and role of practice in human life. Was the differentiation and emergence of the aesthetic sense in and through practice accompanied by a parallel and simultaneous formation of the appropriate aesthetic object for man, or was the emergence of the human being, the shaping of his subjective capabilities through practice, a process tending toward an ever more adequate 'reflection' of the real world, increasingly displayed to man in its constitutive features and their laws in the course of practice? It is clear that this alternative brings up the issue of the relationship of knowledge and practice. It had to be seen once again whether and to what extent human possibilities were set forth and controlled by nature as such or whether human practice retained a certain autonomy from the natural process and man could employ the materials of nature in a creative, wholly 'human' fashion. In short, the *estetičeskoe* discussion brought up the central philosophical problem of the relationship of man and nature.

A conception came into being among some Soviet aestheticians which involved potential hersies because it reconciled the theory of knowledge, ontology and historism in a manner that seemed to downplay the deterministic and cosmocentric factors of dialectical materialism in favor of an anthropological-social conception.[19] For the first time since the early thirties, certain Soviet philosophers, viz. the aestheticians, began to employ the early writings of Marx, in particular the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in order to construct a philosophical basis for their conception of the aesthetic as a socio-human phenomenon. This movement is striking, given that just at this time (*post* 1956) Soviet ideologues were engaged in a campaign to show that works published in the West about the central importance of the young Marx were reactionary falsifications of the true history of the formation of Marxist

philosophy. Also revealing in this regard are the works of the East European 'revisionists' (e.g. Kołakowski) whose interpretations of the young Marx were warning beacons for Soviet philosophers desirous of following this track. Below in Chapter Five we shall contrast the 'revisionist' attitude to Marx with the official Soviet doctrine and show just where the so-called societalists attempted to reach a compromise.

CHAPTER IV

THE AESTHETIC: THE SOCIETALISTS AND NATURISTS

In the last chapter it was asserted that the Soviet concern for the nature of the aesthetic as such had its origins in the question about the aesthetic specificity of art. This last question could not be satisfactorily answered until the objectivity and nature of the aesthetic were established. However, a complete account of the nature of the aesthetic could not be limited to an analysis of the objective criteria for the emergence of aesthetic properties in things. As conceived by the aestheticians of the period, the aesthetic involved the object (the aesthetic property or quality) *and* the subject in a specific relation.

In this chapter the principal theories of the societalists and naturists will be set forth. According to the logic of the essential questions set down in the foregoing chapter, the ensuing discussion is divided into four parts:

– the essence of the aesthetic as such (4.1);
– the multiple manifestations of the aesthetic, i.e. the so-called aesthetic categories in relation to the aesthetic (4.2);
– the constitutive features of the aesthetic attitude, i.e. the subjective side of the aesthetic relation (4.3);
– the specific object of art and the aesthetic essence of art (the 'artistic') (4.4).

4.1. THE ESSENCE OF THE AESTHETIC

4.11. The Objectivity of the Aesthetic

An extensive range of differing opinions existed as to the nature of the common essence of the aesthetic.

In the question on the objectivity of the aesthetic, differences existed among the societalists. Stolovič, Vanslov and Borev can be described as 'extreme' objectivists because of their belief that the aesthetic was embodied in special qualities or properties of objects, expressions that they understood to denote certain ontic features of things. In this regard their views can be positively compared to those of the naturists who differed only on the question of the essence of the objective properties of reality. Other societalists – Gol'dentrixt, Tasalov, Pažitnov, Nedošivin – preferred not to employ the expressions 'aesthetic quality', or 'aesthetic property', stressing rather the creative

side of social labor and its transformative effects as the source of the aesthetic. They can be called 'moderate objectivists', and in some respects their position foreshadowed the later 'relationist' doctrine. As to the essence of the aesthetic, the societalists were divided over the issue of the dialectic of nature and society. Here, Gol'dentrixt assumed an 'extreme' standpoint by not admitting any socially unmediated natural elements into the 'essence' of the aesthetic. The extreme objectivists among the societalists adopted a more moderate posture on this question, speaking of the social content and natural form of the aesthetic properties. Tasalov, Pažitnov, Nedošivin and a few others skirted this question, developing instead a doctrine of socially mediated expressionism, a creationism founded on the Marxian concept of labor. Most of the differences among the societalists came down to the question of accentuating either the cognitive or the active (creative) side of the aesthetic relation. In spite of these differences, however, the societalists consistently aspired to an essentialist monism as to the nature of the aesthetic. The aesthetic was uniformly the same throughout nature, society and human life.

On the whole, the naturist position was not fraught with similar differences of opinion. All naturists were objectivists; all found that whether in nature, society or human life, what was aesthetic arose on the basis of wholly indentifiable qualities. At worst they displayed some uncertainty whether the aesthetic in nature had the same rank as the constitutive features of matter. And unlike the societalists they were not able to maintain that specific aesthetic properties ran across nature, society, and human life in an univocal fashion. Finally, the naturist theory of art was constructed on completely different lines than the societalist theory. The societalists made their theory of art an extension of the general theory of the aesthetic. As we shall see, the naturists did not have the means of adopting a similar standpoint.

4.12. Aesthetic Qualities or Properties

None of the objectivists, societalists or naturists, adequately dealt with the question why the aesthetic in nature takes the form of a property or a quality. Nor did they especially concern themselves with the status of this quality in the object, i.e. whether it stood on a par with the remaining properties of the aesthetic object or whether it was a property of a higher order arising on the foundation of other properties in the object. If they tended to conceive the aesthetic property as different from the other properties of an object they usually failed to explain this difference. Finally, they paid virtually no attention to the question whether there was a difference between aesthetic properties and an aesthetic object as a whole. The last distinction would seem to

have particular importance if there is any question of establishing the difference in status between natural beauty and aesthetic objects which are the result of human activity.

A rather benign but significant difference of opinion arose between L. N. Stolovič and V. V. Vanslov as to whether to employ the expression 'quality (*kačestvo*) or 'property' (*svojstvo*) when speaking about the aesthetic features of reality. Vanslov preferred the expression 'quality' because he felt that it corresponds to the sensible particularity of the aesthetic and because it grasps the aesthetic phenomenon as a whole (*celoe*).[1] In his language the aesthetic quality is:

(1) sensibly-concrete (*čuvstvenno-konkretnyj*) and directly perceived by the sense organs;

(2) expressive, contentful, essentially signifying (*suščestvenno-značimyj*);

(3) expressive of a socially mediated human content.[2]

The implication of Vanslov's views is that the aesthetic quality is a substantial quality, permitting the conclusion that anything which has it is an aesthetic object in the strict sense, since the quality characterizes it as a whole.

Stolovič, on the contrary, preferred the expression 'property'. According to him, the expression 'aesthetic property'

(1) designates the source of the subject's aesthetic relation (i.e. attitude);

(2) characterizes the aesthetic 'qualities' as properties and not autonomous substances or essences;

(3) expresses a relation of one phenomenon to another, viz. that of a sensible concrete object to socio-historical practice.[3]

The first remark refers to the requirement that aesthetic perceptions be judged true or false on the basis of their correspondence to objective aesthetic properties. The second and third aspects, however, come back implicitly to the question whether the aesthetic should be understood as substantial or relational. Stolovič explicitly refuses the substantialist interpretation, preferring to regard the aesthetic as a relational property which a given object takes on when it comes into contact with man in his practice.

It will be necessary to return to this semantic dispute in a later chapter. It has wider philosophical ramifications than is immediately evident, being related not only to the question of the essence of the aesthetic, but also to the possibilities of an ontology and epistemology of 'socio-human' objects.

Because the autonomy, substantiality of the aesthetic property was not a problem for him, Stolovič virtually ignored 'structural' analysis in favor of genetic inquires: how do social practice and concrete objects and phenomena

of nature accede to relationships in which the latter acquire aesthetic properties? Unfortunately, in one place Stolovič merely rephrases the question in the answer, putting the stress on the relationship of the thing to social practice. "The concrete sensible side of the object or phenomenon in its concrete historical objective relationship to social man, to man's society, is what we call the aesthetic property of this object or phenomenon." [4] In another text he speaks as if the object calls forth to itself the relation of social practice. "Aesthetic properties of objects are the capacity of concrete sensible things to call forth in man determinate ideative emotional relations to them thanks to the role these things play in the concrete system of social relations." [5] In his search for the genesis of the aesthetic properties of objects Stolovič cannot get beyond a functionalism, a theory of the object's role: that is aesthetic which has an aesthetic function, but there is no explanation at this level why something must have an aesthetic function in the system of social relations or what in the object predisposes it, so to speak, to play this role. Stolovič's definition of aesthetic properties risks circularity: the relation of social practice to object calls forth the property, but the property calls forth the relation *qua* aesthetic relation.

As we shall see below, whether or not the aesthetic property was ontically relational or substantial did not have greater importance at the cognitive-evaluative level. From this perspective there was no question but that the aesthetic quality/property was thoroughly 'objective'.

Although they opposed the societalists' characterization of the essence of aesthetic qualities, the naturists were fundamentally in accord with the objective status of aesthetic qualities. Quite in keeping with Lenin's copy theory, A. Egorov wrote: "Every materialism . . . starts from the fact that outside of us, outside of our mind there exist objects, and their qualities which we call aesthetic. Their existence does not depend on the cognitional subject, his senses, will or consciousness." [6] There can be little doubt that this text affirms the objective existence of aesthetic properties in the world, in objects which are otherwise endowed with various physical properties. And yet this same author qualified his own views: " . . . the expression 'aesthetic qualities' is fully justified if these qualities (properties) are considered as aesthetic particularities of objects and phenomena of the entire objective world and not as a choice of narrowly conceived traits or separate elements which can be counted on the fingers . . . " [7] "Narrowly conceived traits or separate elements" refers to the conception of the societalists who claimed to be able to discover next to the physical, etc. properties of things aesthetic qualities (properties). By rejecting this conception of the aesthetic property or quality,

Egorov is in fact implying that what is aesthetic is directly and exclusively related to the constitutive features of objects of the material world, viz. the physical, chemical, etc. properties of things. However, he does not employ expressions identifying the aesthetic in nature with the physical properties of things, whatever his intentions may actually have been. The naturist position on this question remained ambivalent; aesthetic properties were not to be found next to the constitutive features of material objects, but yet they were not simply identified with them even though no third possibility seemed to be in evidence. V.S. Kornienko says that aesthetic properties of material objects are on the same 'level' as their mechanical, physical, chemical properties;[8] in another text he expresses the problematic view that aesthetic properties should *not* be *fully* identified with the non-aesthetic features of objects.[9] A. N. Dmitrieva, however, is more emphatic in rejecting identity. Whatever it is, she says, that lies at the basis of our aesthetic concepts "this something should not be identified with a determinate physical phenomenon in the form of air waves, perceived by our hearing organs as sound or the combinations of lights, perceived by the retina of the eye".[10]

It would appear that, like Vanslov in the opposing camp, the naturists wanted to have their cake and eat it too. Whatever it is that makes a thing aesthetically valent, it must be a fitting correlate of sensory perception but still not be identical to what is usually supposed to correspond to sensory perception. It is revealing that all of the naturists cited above, as well as others, occasionally lapse into descriptions in which they speak of qualities of things '*we* call beautiful', or which lie at the basis of '*our* concepts of beauty', or which 'incite reactions, feelings, sensations in us'. Such formulations could be read as constituting a significant retreat on the road of objectivism in aesthetics. Indeed, it is only a step from such loose remarks to the explicit rejection of objectivism, a rejection formulated by L. Kogan as early as 1959.

> Any real phenomenon is capable of being the object of aesthetic reflection and at the same time it can be the object of another, scientific, cognitional form of reflection. We do not know such properties and qualities of phenomena which are the object of an aesthetic reflection only. Evidently such properties do not exist.[11]

Had Soviet aestheticians been familiar at this time with the distinction between valuation-evaluation and cognition they might not have recoiled as quickly before this 'subjectivist' definition.

Another opinion existed in the late fifties which was then most commonly assimilated by its critics to the societalist standpoint, because it did in fact claim that the aesthetic was of socio-human nature. Recent Soviet treatments

of the *estetičeskoe* discussion speak of the 'productionist' (*proizvodstvennik*) or 'laborite' (*trudovnik*) standpoint.[12] Its adherents (Nedošivin, Tasalov, Pažitnov, Gol'dentrixt, *et al.*) on the whole avoided the expressions 'aesthetic property' or 'quality'. Although, for example, G. Nedošivin speaks of the same factors as Vanslov and Stolovič in characterizing the aesthetic (viz. it must be associated with a sensibly perceived object, be expressive and have or relate to socio-human significance),[13] he explicitly rejects the idea that the object of man's aesthetic relation contains the socio-human content in the form of a property. "We aesthetically enjoy the being of nature when we are able to enjoy it spiritually, humanly. *But this does not mean, as some think, that the aesthetic pleasure is the enjoyment of what is human in the object.*" [14] Tasalov speaks of the aesthetic as something which is neither wholly objective nor wholly subjective, but is a relation between the two.[15] Pažitnov claims that the object of man's aesthetic relation is not a quality or property of the relation but the relation of aesthetic appropriation itself.[16] These tentative steps in the direction of a relationist doctrine of the aesthetic were frequently marred by inconsistent references to aesthetic properties, qualities in the traditional objectivist sense.[17]

4.121. Content and form. The essence of the aesthetic according to the Societalists. If the societalists all agreed that the essence of the aesthetic consisted of a socio-human content, they came to odds over the issue whether anything natural, physical was preserved in the objects of man's aesthetic relation. Stolovič, Vanslov and Borev originally postulated that aesthetic properties (qualities) could not exist outside the natural, formal, physical properties of the object, even if they were not reducible to the latter. On the contrary, Nedošivin, Tasalov, Pažitnov, in particular S. S. Gol'dentrixt eschewed the presence of unmediated natural factors in an aesthetic object. For the former group the aesthetic could take the form of a property or a quality only because it had a physical substrate, while the latter group, as we have seen, tended to shy away from reifying the object of the aesthetic relation. In the end, however, the difference between the two sides had to do with the different conceptions of the nature and effectiveness of the labor process. The relevant ontological issues were on the whole left unthematized.

In his book, *Estetičeskoe v dejstvitel'nosti i v iskusstve* Stolovič defined the essence of the aesthetic property as follows.

> ... the natural qualities of objects, things, phenomena, emerge as the form of their aesthetic properties, whereas the social significance, the social sense of these things,

objects, phenomena, objectively formed in the course of socio-historical practice, emerges as the content of aesthetic properties.[18]

V. V. Vanslov asserts the same thing in the *Problema prekrasnogo*.

Aesthetic qualities are natural according to their immediate being (*naličnomu bytiju*), in the sense that they are material, sensible, dependent on the stuff (*veščestvu*) of nature, its properties and laws. But they are social according to their essence, for they express man, the traits and properties formed by his society, they objectively correspond to one side or another of his life activity.[19]

A tentative explanation of this analysis of the aesthetic takes the following form:

– things, objects, processes, phenomena – in short the material world – are characterized by the interaction of lawful regularities (*zakonomernosti*) governing not only the material, physical properties of things, but their formal properties as well, viz., symmetry, harmony, proportion, wholeness, etc.;

– in the course of their productive activity men discover these lawful regularities and consciously employ them to satisfy their needs; in this process they transform, 'humanize' nature;

– this transformation is equivalent to the incorporation of these objects into the system of social relations, wherein they acquire a significance, a 'content' they did not formerly possess.

All this may be quite true and very interesting but it hardly clarifies the nature of the aesthetic. In the Marxist framework this analysis can rather be seen as the initial sketch of a theory of the 'social object', an object whose being is rooted both in the material world and in human purposeful activity.[20]

Stolovič sees the problem when he asks: "why do objects and phenomena in which determinate lawful regularities emerge exert an aesthetic influence on man, i.e. why do they call forth that ideative-emotional reaction which is proper to man's aesthetic relation to reality?" [21] All the societalists expressly rejected the 'contemplative metaphysical materialism' of which they accused the naturists;[22] nor did they accept Burov's position according to which the transformation of the object, aesthetically speaking, took place only in consciousness;[23] nor finally would they accept any idealism, either of the Hegelian variety (the idea incorporated into a material form) or the *Einfühlung* theory (the subject projects his psychological states onto the object). Their answer to the question was merely that in appropriating nature through labor, man stamped it (respectively, the objects of nature) with a sign symbolizing the role it came to play in the social world.

Any object or phenomenon began to take on aesthetic significance when and only when this object or phenomenon 'fills up' in the process of socio-historical practice with a content expressing human social relations revealing themselves in the concrete sensible form of this object or phenomenon.[24]

This role the object came to play in the social world affirmed the degree to which man in a certain historical period had come to affirm himself spiritually, to experience joyfully his human possibilities and powers, capabilities for creation, the sense of freedom. "The aesthetic in reality is a socio-historical and not a natural reality. . . . It arises when the human content rules over physical properties, manifesting itself in them and through them." [25]

S. S. Gol'dentrixt objected to Stolovič that, in attempting to preserve a natural form for the social content of the aesthetic property, this explanatory scheme was inconsistent. After all, said Gol'dentrixt, genetically speaking, the purely formal exponents of aesthetic properties – order, symmetry, proportion, etc. – emerged and were appropriated by man only in his social labor, beginning in tool production, and were not simply apprehended in their sheer natural immediacy.[26] Moreover, they came to have their quintessential aesthetic sense for the first time in art which is a form of human activity far removed from the immediate sensual contact with the world, even that activity which is mediated by tools.[27] In this sense, therefore, these formal properties have a functional value which is never just purely formal, i.e. non-social, but which always reflects the importance they have come to have in human life. Hence, Gol'dentrixt considers it contradictory to say that aesthetic social content is deprived of its own internal form and finds it only in aesthetic qualities of nature, and that form can exist up to and independently of content.[28] Instead, Gol'dentrixt urges the view that

. . . aesthetic form like the aesthetic content bears a social-historical character. In fact, in productive practice and artistic creativity man actively and purposefully transforms and refashions the objects of nature and their properties, he creates a new content in a new form.[29]

Stolovič seems have been somewhat influenced by Gol'dentrixt's criticisms, although he did not fully accept the latter's conclusions. In the *Predmet estetiki*, Stolovič explicitly repulsed his earlier dualistic theory of a social content and a natural form. ". . . the interrelation of the natural and the social in an aesthetic property is distributed not between content and form, but permeates both content and form." [30] Stolovič added by way of explanation:

. . . the content of the aesthetic property is the natural object itself in its . . . relation to society, i.e. the content contains in itself both natural as well as social elements

constituting this object ... the form of the aesthetic property as social phenomenon ... is not a purely natural form.[31]

Stolovič here meets Gol'dentrixt's contention that there must be a basic community of essence between content and form. He recognized the validity of Gol'dentrixt's criticisms that the aesthetic object in reality could not consist of two mutually indifferent segments of which only one was aesthetic while the other remained unaffected by the presence of the latter. However, he rejected Gol'dentrixt's own conclusions, interpreting them to mean that the entire object became aestheticized in the sense of expressing the human essence through and through, as if nothing remained of the physical basis after man had aesthetically appropriated it.[32] Stolovič's own case remains ambiguous because he continued to conceive the aesthetic on the model of a relational property. But by recognizing that the 'form' of the aesthetic property is affected in this relation of an object to social practice, the relational property has in fact become a substantial quality in Vanslov's sense, because the whole object is affected. It would therefore be better to talk about the aesthetic object as something simultaneously participating in two orders of being, the natural and the socio-human.

Stolovič,[33] K. M. Kantor and R. Sadov[34] proposed Marx's theory of the commodity as the model by which to understand the aesthetic property. Like the commodity value of a good, the aesthetic property depends wholly on social relations. Like the commodity, the aesthetic property is sensible-extra-sensible (*čuvstvenno-sverxčuvstvennyj*), i.e. it arises upon but is not identical with certain natural qualities. However, unlike the commodity, which levels the qualitative specificity of objects, the aesthetic property is associated with wholly concrete natural (formal) properties. Despite the differences, the analogy is apt because it signals the curious social objectivity that an aesthetic property is said to possess: it is an extra-individual social being grounded in human practice. Its content is equal to no more and no less than the actual system of social relations, as these reflect the degree of development of man's powers and capacities.

The upshot of this analysis of content and form in terms of socio-historical practice was to deprive nature of any autonomous aesthetic significance effectively. But what of the moon, the stars, the cosmic grandeur of nature, which certainly surpass men and will most certainly never become wholly appropriated and yet – or perhaps for that very reason – have traditionally inspired rhapsodic ecstasies to which the description 'aesthetic' can surely be applied? Being nothing but pure, unappropriated nature, do these phenomena

have no aesthetic significance at all? Is all this illusory, worthy of being debunked as so much sentimental rubbish? Faced with such an unpopular conclusion, the societalists retreated into a theory which has consequences they failed to realize. According to them, humanized nature is not just that nature which has been directly transformed in labor; it is also that nature which on the basis of man's practice has come to have significance, play a certain role as a 'back-ground' to man's activity.[35] This 'background' includes stars, rainbows, Northern lights, the unrestrainable forces of nature, etc. All these things and phenomena possess some kind of determinate lawful interconnections with the objects of man's direct transformatory practice.

V. I. Lenin characterizes practice as an unmediated reality and as having the 'perfection of universality', i.e. it appropriates not only the given object but the whole *kind, the class* insofar as the object gives expression to universal laws proper to every kind or class of similar objects.[36]

The implication is that, in appropriating something through labor, man uncovers the laws regulating the thing: he necessarily 'appropriates' the laws along with the object. But if an object's aesthetic quality or property is equivalent to its inclusion in a given system of social relations, the laws of the appropriated object are *a fortiori* included in this system too, and therefore take on aesthetic significance in the sense defined. Whether the sphere of human effectiveness in this world is ever increased is unimportant, since, from the very first act of social production in which he began to realize his essence, man aesthetically mastered the entire network of interconnected laws governing nature. Unwittingly, the societalists talked themselves into a pan-aestheticism; everything in the world has aesthetic significance because there is nothing that does not fall into the orbit of man's interest. It is a sign of the degree to which their analyses were artificial, steeped in an alien philosophical baggage, that the same aestheticians wrestled with the question whether, for example, mud and disease, etc. were aesthetic phenomena because they were related to man's social being through their relationship to objects of his direct concern.

4.13. *Harmony and the Laws of Matter; The Naturist Conception*

The naturist conception was comparatively straightforward, being a version of what the Polish non-Marxist Tatarkiewicz calls the 'Great Theory of the Beautiful', so named because of its longevity.[37] Briefly, in one form or another, the Great Theory comes down to saying that the aesthetic quality of

an object consists in the "magnitude, quality and quantity of parts and of their reciprocal relationship".[38]

The several Soviet formulations all rejected a dialectic of heterogeneous aesthetic content and form and conceived the aesthetic in terms referring to the homogeneous natural qualities and formal configurations. Nevertheless, the naturists did seek behind the natural immediacy of the aesthetic configurations of natural qualities and forms for an 'essence' of the aesthetic. Here, too, the naturists stood on time-tested soil. Earlier proponents of the Great Theory had by no means been 'formalists' when they identified the various formal qualities with beauty; these were regularities based on the laws of nature itself. The naturists located this essence in matter's laws, in the evolutionary course of the material world toward ever more perfect living forms, right up to man. Utilizing Černyševskij in this context they supported the claim that whatever was a manifestation of life embodied aesthetic properties and fell into a hierarchy of perfection. This hierarchy took the form:nature – man (the organism) – society (social man).

The problematic point of their doctrine, a point on which their differences with the societalists were especially outstanding, was that of the role to be accorded to man in this perspective. Although many of them admitted that the aesthetic would be inconceivable without men, they were, all the same, loath to admit that it depended in some essential way on man. At best they admitted that the human aesthetic sense was historically relative and that, as a consequence, man's comprehension of natural beauty was subject to the general state of his assimilation to the world. (The naturist theory will accordingly design a very different theory of art.)

In the first place, the standard aesthetic properties of reality are certain formal qualities (e.g. harmony, symmetry, rhythm, proportion, etc.) as well as moments denoted by the expressions 'purposefulness' (*celesoobraznost'*) and 'wholeness' (*celostnost'*). In the second place, even if such formal qualities stood out against the background of an object's constitutive physical properties, their true foundation was outside of the particular object, viz. in laws governing the course of nature's processes. Thirdly, the degree to which a theory or phenomenon was aesthetically perfect depended on the degree to which matter's laws were concretized in it. In other words, the criterion of the perfection of an aesthetic phenomenon was the interplay between its aesthetic properties and the reflection of the level of material progress and development.

Aesthetic properties of natural bodies are an organic, constitutive part of their quality,

synthesizing in themselves mechanical, physical, chemical and biological properties of objects and processes. Harmony, symmetry, rhythm, purposefulness, color, form, etc. emerge and exist as the expression of the interactivity of different sides of developing matter.[39]

With few exceptions the various aesthetic properties identified in this text remained undefined by the naturists, this being left to definitions within dialectical materialism or appeals to science or even to common sense to give them their meaning. Of the writers worth noting in this connection, Dmitrieva elaborated the concept of harmony,[40] S. T. Vajman developed in detail the concept of wholeness, [41] and G. Pospelov defined aesthetic perfection.[42]

Dmitrieva chose harmony as the fundamental property of nature and things to call forth in man the aesthetic relation to reality. Quite in keeping with the tradition, Dmitrieva defines harmony as the qualitative expression of order, structure, the unity of parts in a whole. The delicate and exact connections of elements at the heart of a whole – is this not the very thing which the language of aesthetics defined as 'harmony'? "For the word 'harmony' . . . means connection, the structure of the whole, the commensurateness of its parts. In other words, unity in multiplicity".[43]

Dmitrieva is aware that such a harmonious whole need not be exclusively the object of aesthetics; science studies wholes too (the 'cosmos'), remaining indifferent to their aesthetic aspect. Hence, she qualifies her remarks by adding that ". . . insofar as this connection speaks to us about life" it calls forth in us an aesthetic reaction.[44] To speak of life is to refer to the passage, the progressive movement from the lower to the higher, from the simple to the complex, in which harmony begins to become evident. To perceive the aesthetic features of an object is to see neither just harmony of structure nor the complexification of life's forces; it is rather to catch life in the act of striving to express itself in ever more harmonious concrete forms. What is aesthetic in nature, society and human life is not only harmonious; it is also purposeful, goal-oriented.

S. T. Vajman attempted a more rigorous analysis of the aesthetic whole. Instead of speaking about harmony, Vajman examined the quality 'wholeness' (*celostnost'*) itself. Warning that 'wholeness' in his sense is not to be understood in the sense of *holism* (priority of the structure to the parts), *mereologism* (priority of parts to the whole) and *Gestaltism* (which, according to Vajman is a conceptualism and thus a subjectivism), Vajman settles on a 'totalism' which he considers identical in meaning to the Marxian concept of the 'concrete'.[45] 'Wholeness' is defined as follows: "The ensemble of components – the whole – constitutes the form 'wholeness'; the content of

wholeness is the interactivity (reciprocity) of the components constituting a new organism, a social . . . or natural concretion." [46] At first sight this text appears to be drawing out the formal-ontological category 'wholeness' which has as its essential correlate the category 'part' ('partness'), neither of which suppose anything about the determinations of any concrete whole in which they happen to be concretized. But Vajman adds that the essence of wholeness consists of nothing else but the relation of the corporeal to the corporeal, [47] a characterization which limits the applicability of the concept to only one certain kind of object, viz. the summative whole, an assemblage of material parts which does not support anything in existence. But, as it turns out, Vajman is not speaking about formal-ontological categories but rather about a higher-order sense-quality of an object. Any object at all consists of three 'levels' (*uroven'*) [48], an expression which accords badly with sense-quality analysis since it too requires formal–ontological explication. There is a lower level, consisting of discrete 'physical' and 'geometric' properties; a middle level, which involves the whole object understood as a summative whole in which the parts stand in the relation of cause and effect (although the author does not explain this conception); finally, the higher level, which is ". . . an organic intermingling of all properties of the object, merging into a single, sensible focus of a new 'sudden' structure".[49] The last level is a higher synthesis of sensible properties of the object, and although it cannot be perceived all at once, as soon as it springs into view it frees the object from its myriad ties and connections to the external world (as far as the perceiving subject is concerned). The more independent the object is of its surroundings the greater is its aesthetic significance.[50] Vajman's analysis fails to explain just why this sudden passage from level to level in an object occurs and just why it is perceived as aesthetic. It is not the work of the subject (gestaltism), and, after all is said and done it is not clear why wholeness as such should incite an aesthetic reaction. Dmitrieva was clearer in this regard: it is not enough to say that a whole is aesthetic. To be aesthetic the whole must be harmonious and expressive (even if of phenomena and forces external to the whole). It nonetheless remains true that this conception was one of the most detailed during the period under examination here.

G. Pospelov took a different path, preferring to speak of the perfection of a whole. Dmitrieva had spoken in passing of aesthetic harmony as a perfect synthesis of the internal and the external (e.g. the interior spiritual magnanimity of a man harmonized with an external regal bearing is aesthetic). A bit of the same was contained in Vajman who, in postulating that wholeness was the unification of corporeal elements, insisted that this conception hid

nothing, that its essence was not ideal and was as visible and tangible as the external form of the connection of the parts. Pospelov defines perfection as follows: "The aesthetic perfection of a phenomenon consists . . . in the relative perfection of the external manifestation of its essence . . . ".[51] A thing's essence is identical with its generic properties which Pospelov defines in the traditional manner as common properties (of things belonging to a certain species) constituting the foundation in being of all phenomena in nature and society.[52] The traditional Marxist-Leninist dialectical principle of the particular and the universal, expressed under various headings as the dialectic of content and form, image and type, individual and general, is asssumed here as elsewhere in Soviet aesthetic theory. If it occurs in the Soviet theory of art, where it may have sense to say that an artistic image bears, points to a 'larger' meaning embodied in concrete form, this dialectic seems less appropriate here. In contradistinction to the view, according to which aesthetic properties are unique and incomparable qualities of things, incapable of being defined, perfection in Soviet aesthetic theory requires qualities which are repeatable, hence definable and accessible to rational analysis. The three authors share the same attitude: whether speaking of harmonious wholes or perfections, they all suppose that these are all analyzable into constituents and that the aesthetic is fully cognizable. Where the societalists read a human essence into the aesthetic, an essence that can be decomposed into the constitutive elements of Marx's theory of man and society, the naturists sought to find in the aesthetic but another expression of the universal law of interconnection, a law which is the basis of the materialist dialectic.

Stolovič conveniently drew up a list of the naturist conceptions of the aesthetic in nature, i.e. of the 'essence' of the aesthetic in reality:

(1) unity and multiplicity;
(2) law and necessity;
(3) universal interconnection and reciprocal conditioning;
(4) correspondence of content and form;
(5) progressive development of nature;
(6) the perfection of natural forms;
(7) 'metaphorical views', which Stolovič fails to identify.[53] It is frequently difficult to decide whether the naturists intended all these factors to be aesthetic in their own right, apart from the concrete objects, or whether there are aesthetic properties of concrete objects resting on the foundation of these principles and to the extent that they are the regulative laws of all beings in the material universe they are a 'source' of the aesthetic in concrete objects. Pospelov, for example, expressly refused to acknowledge an

autonomous aesthetic essence. "The essence of life becomes aesthetic only when it manifests itself directly in separate objects of material or spiritual life."[54] Only when a thing's generic properties are perfectly realized in it and when they correspond to a relatively advanced stage of nature's development does that thing come to have aesthetic properties.[55] Dmitrieva too, refuses to admit that matter by itself is positive or negative, good or bad, and hence beautiful or ugly in and of itself.[56] It is man who learns how to evaluate nature's laws in such a way as to distinguish what is beneficial for life and its forms from what is harmful.[57] Knowledge of nature and its laws is the basis upon which man 'evaluates' the situation of the different species, objects, processes and phenomena. The question will become, however, whether man evaluates in this fashion in relation to his own needs and desires or whether nature supplies him with a criterion.

The answer is both one and the other, i.e. man evaluates the aesthetic properties of nature in terms of the place he occupies in nature; his perception of the perfection and purposeful character of life always starts from his own position at the pinnacle of nature's development. V. Tasalov, a societalist, summarizes that naturist position very succinctly.

> Dialectical materialism is far from opposing man and the tendencies of nature. Engels said that in man nature comes to self-consciousness. Creativity is not only man's lot – as a spontaneous process it exists in all of nature. . . . perceiving beauty in nature, man understands this beauty by starting not from it itself, but always from his own representations about the aesthetic. The essence of any phenomenon can be understood only in its highest development. The key to the monkey's anatomy lies in man's anatomy.[58]

But where the societalists decided that the aesthetic could have no sense below the 'highest' stratum and that therefore its essence was material only in the social-human mode of matter's existence, the naturists insisted that even the nature existing before and up to man was aesthetic, in the sense that the progressive purposeful thrust of nature, tending toward ever greater perfection of its forms, operated according to laws that man perceived as life constituting, as beneficial to his own existence. Such a formulation of the theory is extremely ambiguous if not utterly meaningless. For the question is whether there is something to which the term 'aesthetic' refers, a something that attaches to qualities like harmony, symmetry, etc. or to laws and universal connections that are beneficial to life's development. By their continual reference to an 'objective foundation' of 'our concepts of the aesthetic' ("The objective foundation of the aesthetic properties is the universal connection and reciprocal conditioning of matter in its development" [59]; "However, the

properties of nature, which *we perceive as beautiful* (italics mine – E.S.) whatever they be, are objective. Our consciousness does not attribute them to nature, but only discovers, thinks about, aesthetically experiences them" [60]) the naturists give the impression despite their protests to the contrary that the world takes on an aesthetic allure only for man, i.e. that the term 'aesthetic' does not refer to any properties, qualities, etc. outside of man but to a complex relationship holding between man and nature. In any case, the question can be adequately decided only after examining the nature of the aesthetic relation according to the naturists.

4.2. THE AESTHETIC CATEGORIES

Most of the preceding abstract theorizing was applied in a somewhat more concrete way in the extensive discussions of the aesthetic categories, especially the category of the beautiful. Originally this aspect of the Soviet aesthetic discussion during the period under consideration consisted of a two-part debate:

(1) was the category of the aesthetic different from the category of the beautiful? and

(2) were the remaining categories 'modifications' of the beautiful or were they equivalent in status to it?

But another issue of considerable importance, reflecting the controversy between the societalists and the naturists, had to do with the 'extension' of the aesthetic categories. If, according to their 'intension' the aesthetic categories were possessed of a common aesthetic essence, did they therefore also hold for all domains of reality usually singled out by Marxists-Leninists, viz. nature, society and human life?

In the initial stage of the discussion after 1956 little or no attention was paid to the question of the number and systematic unity of the aesthetic categories. On the whole the categories, or rather the names for them, were taken from the tradition and were integrated with the requirements of Marxist-Leninist philosophical analysis, social theory, anthropology, etc. and interconnected according to principles which are in most instances extraneous to aesthetics. At this time, moreover, attention was usually limited to only a handful of categories (viz. the aesthetic, beautiful, ugly, tragic, comic and artistic), a list which was woefully inadequate to account for the richness and complexity of the aesthetic phenomenon. It was as a result of the unsatisfactory conclusions reached in the aesthetic discussion that, starting in the mid-sixties, several authors began to search for the principles of a logical

system of the aesthetic categories.[61] These researches have been increasingly associated with the advances made in general methodology and the integration of aesthetics with other relevant disciplines.

Before 1956 the situation of the aesthetic categories, even the most fundamental such as the beautiful, was quite desperate. Although their names figured on lists of problems to be examined by Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, they were certainly not accorded the priority of analysis that they deserved. Thus, for example, in 1948 G. Nedošivin put the concept of party-mindedness before that of the beautiful and defined the latter in such a way as to virtually identify it with socio-philosophical theory; "The beautiful is ... new man, his creative labor, the conscious activity of the people directed to the building of communist society and the defense of socialism".[62] In the same year the program for the proposed *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* mentioned the categories of the beautiful, tragic and comic in the fifth place only, defining them sociologically.[63] However, in 1955 a leading article in *Voprosy filosofii* criticized aestheticians for leaving the aesthetic categories in an undeveloped state.[64] The same journal sponsored a round-table discussion in 1956 devoted to the object of aesthetics.[65] Opinions ranged from the view that beauty is the proper object of aesthetics *tout court* to the less extreme views that among the concerns of aestheticians the categories should occupy a prominent place, to the again extreme view that aesthetics is not concerned with such concepts at all. But in spite of the ever-growing concentration of attention on the aesthetic categories, V. S. Skaterščikov still felt justified in 1974 to complain about the state of this problematic in Soviet aesthetics.[66] Referring to studies by Borev, Kagan, Šestakov and Krjukovskij, Skaterščikov complained of a lack of comprehension of the essence of the aesthetic categories, of terminological confusions, the absence of serious study of the relation of the general aesthetic categories to those of art, etc.

When the Soviets speak of aesthetic categories they adhere to the model of the philosophical categories. Lenin's authority is invoked to provide the general framework. "The categories are the steps of the apportionment (*stupenki vydelenija*), i.e. the cognition of the world, the nodal points and networks aiding in the cognition and mastery of the world".[67] Accordingly, the *Kratikij slovar' po estetike* defines the aesthetic categories as the most general logical concepts, uncovering the content of aesthetics as a science, scientifically generalizing the aesthetic character of surrounding reality".[68] These categories fall into three groups: first, the most general categories, second, those which refer to aesthetic cognition and its various forms, and third, those which have to do with art. In the first group – the categories

which concern us here – the following are mentioned in the *Slovar'*: the ugly. sublime, harmonic, heroic, gracious, dramatic, idyllic, delicate, comic, beauty (*krasota*), base, pathetic, plastic, beautiful (*prekrasnoe*), ridiculous, tragic, farcical, extravagance.[69] Noteworthy here is the absence in this account of the category of the 'aesthetic' itself, an absence reflecting the failure, as far as some aestheticians were concerned, to discover the common 'content' of all the aesthetic categories. Ju. Borev, the only author who at this time devoted several monographs to the aesthetic categories, defines the essence as well as the origin in consciousness of the aesthetic categories in this way:

> Like the categories of the materialist dialectic, the categories of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics are nodal points in the history of human thought. They reflect the most important qualities and relations of the material world, nature and society. The process of the development of the categories is the reflection of man's social practice. The categories provide the possibilities to grasp reality in its essential moments and . . . to act on reality. The categories appear as the reflection of the essential sides of reality, they allow man to separate himself from nature and to come to know the world more profoundly.[70]

This text affirms the cognitive significance of the aesthetic categories in two senses. Taken singly and in conjunction they tell us about the way reality actually is aesthetically. They also tell us something about man and his relationship to reality from moment to moment.

4.21. The Naturist Theory of the Categories

Of the issues mentioned at the beginning of Section 4.2, the first occupied the crucial place: are the categories of the beautiful and the aesthetic logically equivalent or distinct? The foregoing sections of this chapter have perhaps left the impression that, like the societalists, the naturists too had elaborated a general theory of the aesthetic that was equally valid for any domain in which aesthetic properties emerged and which succeeded in exhaustively describing these properties. In point of fact, however, their remarks on this subject were virtually identical with their theory of the beautiful, and the question whether this theory had universal extension, whether, in other words, the other aesthetic categories were somehow or other 'modifications' of this one, had still to be treated by the naturists. As soon as a committment was made to theories of formal qualities like harmony, symmetry, proportion, etc., or to concepts like law, universal interconnection, purposive development, theories which have traditionally intended to explain the essence of the beautiful, the situation with regard to certain other aesthetic properties became uncertain. If, for example, categories such as the ugly or the repulsive are brought into play, it is clear that they can be characterized as the

contraries of the beautiful, as in some sense the absence, even the negation eventually of the qualities pertaining to the beautiful (especially where 'formal' beauty is concerned). But how would the tragic and the comic be so explained, or the sublime and the noble, if these really are aesthetic categories? It does not seem very informative or even especially fitting to assert that the comic is the absence of a law, or that the tragic is negation of universal interconnection, and the like. In comparison with the beautiful and the ugly, these qualities are all in some sense 'contentful', they are expressive of something that carries beyond the countenance of the object or phenomenon, frequently remaining indifferent to the external countenance. A strict monism, based on formal qualities and laws of nature pertaining to the structure and complexity of objects and phenomena, appears to be too restricted to handle all the nuances required by a ramified aesthetic theory.

Many of the naturists could excuse their narrow interest in the beautiful by referring to their theory of a hierarchy of perfection in the formation and development of life. Dmitrieva unhesitatingly calls beauty the central aesthetic category because it embodies the ideal regularity of life's rhythms in nature and human society.[71] She says nothing at all about the other aesthetic categories. Pospelov arrives at slightly different conclusions. He concentrates on the relative perfection of a thing, which perfection is measured by the degree to which the generic properties of the thing are realized in it, eventually becoming an exemplary case of its kind.[72] When applied to inorganic and organic nature, including the human body, this theory makes the category of aesthetic perfection wider in extension than that of beauty. For, according to Pospelov, there are even things which, although they belong to a 'mediocre' kind on the scale of perfection of life's forms, nevertheless realize their generic properties in an exemplary fashion, thereby becoming aesthetically valent. "It is a matter of particular animals and plants, representing a superior holistic manifestation of their 'unsuperior' biological kind, briefly – to be superior in an unsuperior kind".[73] By implication, therefore, superiority (perfection) in a superior kind, the manifestation of excellence at a relatively high level of nature's development, is constitutive of genuine aesthetic natural beauty.[74] Consequently, Pospelov arrives at the following classification of the aesthetic categories: he recognizes only three principal categories: the beautiful, the ugly and the non-beautiful, the last covering cases of aesthetically valent exemplary mediocrities.[75] None of these categories has an absolute content since the forward thrust of life's forms is a continual process requiring constant revision of earlier evaluations of particular objects. It is not a question of the relativity of the concepts at work as much as it is of the 'relativity'

of life itself, spewing up new exemplars of its innumerable species. This entire point of view is best summarized in the following text.

> Beauty in nature is that which expresses the highest degree of development of some object or phenomenon; its most important particularity is its organicity and 'teleology', an uninhibited striving toward perfection in which the life confirming essence is most fully expressed and in which the unvanquished progressive creative force of nature is most clearly manifested.[76]

Here, perhaps more clearly than in the earlier discussion, it is evident how much this theory relies on the Soviet doctrine of emergent evolution and a metaphysical materialism.

The essential question for this theory of beauty was whether it came up short before the aesthetic nature of human life, not, that is, the life of the human organism, but the life of man as (in Marxist-Leninist philosophy) a human social being. It is at this point especially that the naturist theory is guilty of a considerable degree of arbitrariness. V. S. Kornienko, for example, asserts that in human society "aesthetic properties are possessed by the spiritual side of people's life. Like nature, man's social being manifests a striving toward harmony and fullness." Kornienko therefore asserts that universal laws of interconnection, development, etc. are at work aesthetically in social being.[78] Pospelov discovers the same process of perfectability at the heart of social being that he elevated to the rank of an aesthetic principle in organic and inorganic nature.[79] In order to avoid reductionism, however, a distinction had to be drawn between the beautiful in the various forms of non-human nature and the beautiful in socio-human reality, even if the underlying 'metaphysical' essence of the two beauties is the same. Nature has beauty (*krasota*), a beauty which is 'formal', although, as we have seen, this kind of beauty has nothing to do with the theory propagated by the formalists. Human life and society are beautiful (*prekrasnye*) in a different sense, to be defined below. To speak of ugliness in nature is to speak of a lack of beauty (*nekrasivyj*) while, in comparison, socio-human being has a relatively 'positive' ugliness (*bezobraznost'*). The tragic, comic, etc. adhere only to social being, there being nothing analogous to them in nature.

The naturists took it for granted that to speak of the beautiful with reference to man as a social being necessarily entailed talking about the degree of perfection of his generic, i.e. spiritual-social attributes. This view could be substantiated by reference to Marx's remark that the human essence was the ensemble of the social relations. In similar fashion the forms of social consciousness had their common roots in the system of social relations that

determined an individual. It was against this background, which hardly anyone bothered to explicitate, that the naturists offered their definitions of the beautiful (*prekrasnoe*). The natural human organism shared the beauty of all natural phenomena, a beauty whose 'content' consisted of the differentiated process of the development of matter according to objective laws. But man *qua* socio-human being has a beauty emanting from his socially conditioned interior life. "The beautiful (*prekrasnoe*) is the superiority, the holistic manifestation of the positive moral essence of social life . . . " [80] 'Holistic manifestation' signifies the unity of exterior form and (interior) content. A shining example of great beauty in this sense is the muscular proletarian, incorporating all-human social values in an exquisitely tailored corporeal shell. On the contrary, the best dressed and well-mannered bourgeois can be endowed only with a 'formal' social beauty (*krasota*), though it does not hide his spiritual bankruptcy. Perhaps to avoid the primitive classifications of social types typical for the aesthetics of 'vulgar sociologism', Pospelov stresses the aesthetically valent character of the last example. On the analogy of life forms which are 'exemplary mediocrities', social types which display formal beauty not enhanced by spiritual beauty can manifest what Pospelov names 'repulsive' aesthetic perfection; e.g. the bourgeois, who is the very quintessence of the expropriator, has positive aesthetic value precisely because he is such an exemplary case of his kind.[81]

The societalist investigation of the aesthetic categories provides a much more coherent and unified perspective.

4.22. The Societalist Theory of the Categories

The opposing societalist conception of the aesthetic categories had the advantage of being theoretically more unified. The primary reason for this fact was to be found in their theory of the aesthetic as such which cuts across all domains of the real world without exception, being concretized in each of them in an univocal fashion. The societalist theory of the beautiful was constructed in such a way as to avoid the separation between a natural and a social beauty. All the remaining aesthetic categories were assimilated to the general essence of the aesthetic. The single most intriguing question in their theory was to discover how the aesthetic was able to be differentiated into such a rich variety of forms.

As we have repeatedly underscored, according to the societalists the origin of aesthetic properties in the objects and phenomena of reality is the relation these objects and phenomena have to human society, or, what comes to the same thing, the relation these objects have to the human social essence,

developed and expressed in and through social labor. Through labor the natural object is brought into the orbit of social relations; at the same moment its aesthetic properties or qualities arise because the human essence has been embodied in the object, man sees himself in the products of his labor.

This general essence of the aesthetic holds good for any of its concretions: the beautiful, ugly, sublime, base, tragic, comic, and so forth. Nevertheless, the beautiful is the central category because it is the very highest expression of the aesthetic. Vanslov defines the beautiful in its relation to the aesthetic as follows. "If the aesthetic in general is born of the 'objectification' of the human essence, then the beautiful is the result of this 'objectification' which provides pleasure . . . as the expression of man in the world, of his development and freedom".[82] Tasalov argues even more explicitly in the same vein. "The aesthetic is different from beauty. The aesthetic is the determinate relation in which man stands against the products of his activity in the process of their creation or perception. Beauty is the contentful form created by man."[83] Not forgetting the basic differences between Vanslov's and Tasalov's versions of 'societalism', it is clear that the foregoing texts come together on the essential points: What is aesthetic is basically human in content, including the beautiful. Tasalov adds that the beautiful is a contentful form, an assertion which corresponds to the general societalist claim that there is no 'natural beauty', whether or not there be some natural foundation for the social 'content' of the beautiful and the remaining aesthetic qualities.

The societalist theory of beauty seemed to add nothing of great importance to Burov's basic claim. "It can be said that in any practical activity of man the object becomes beautiful only insofar as man recognizes himself, his creative possibilities, the richness of his human essence in it".[84] Despite the disclaimers voiced by the societalists against Burov's contention, that man is really the only aesthetic object while the rest of reality is aesthetic only to the extent that it 'symbolizes' man,[85] their own formulations of the definition of the beautiful remained nearly identical. Thus Vanslov seems to echo Burov: "Certain phenomena are beautiful for man when they are perceived as the form of the manifestation of the human essence . . . ".[86] Borev seconds this affirming that the beautiful in society or nature is always expressive of human social life. "The beautiful object is always an object having an extensive positive societal significance over which man as a species essence dominates, which man mastered and in relation to which he is free."[87]

The societalists, however, insisted against Burov on the objectivity of the social significance, speaking of it as a 'content' of a property, resp. quality in an object. Burov regarded beauty to be analogous to truth, i.e. to be a

psychological phenomenon, or in his words "the reflection in consciousness of a determinate quality" in a determinate way. "Beauty is the same thing as truth, but it is truth of a particular quality, according to its object as well as to the state it calls forth in the subject." [88] On the contrary, Vanslov and all the other societalists argued heatedly against such 'subjectivism'.

". . . the beauty of the phenomena of reality exists in human practice outside of the perceptual consciousness and independently of arbitrary will. It can belong to these phenomena not only when someone perceives it, but also when no one perceives it, and hence independently of who is perceiving it and now." [89]

To the extent that man throughout history has been embodying his essence in objects of his labor, these have always had an aesthetic content, prior even to the development of the appropriate awareness of the beauty of an object. Vanslov 'substantiates' such claims by using the example of recently excavated Greek statuary which was objectively beautiful in spite of being buried under tons of rubble and earth, far from appreciative eyes, because it is manifestly stamped with the ideals, the social being of ancient society. [90]

Like the naturists, the societalists relied heavily on the Marxist thesis about the interconnection of the forms of social consciousness. Thus to say that the aesthetic phenomenon is beautiful, for example, is to speak of the manifestation in it of the wealth and richness of the human essence in the multiple fashions in which it appropriates the world. On one hand, it is a question of human intelligence and the resulting freedom from physical necessity, a freedom which depends on the knowledge of natural laws. This aspect is a transcription into the language of aesthetics of Engels' definition of freedom in *Anti-Dühring*. A typical formulation of such a 'transcription' is the following:

The symmetry of the objects of nature arises as a consequence of the holding of natural laws. But its *beauty* arises only as a result of the appropriation of these laws, as a consequence of which his enjoyment of the beautiful becomes possible. [91]

The societalists also apply the Marxian historical dialectic of alienation and class struggle to the essence of the beautiful, speaking of the beautiful as that which manifests man's struggle for freedom as a progressive tendency of society as a whole. "The beautiful . . . is the struggle for a harmonic, universally developed free man, emancipated from the path of exploitation, toward economic and political equality." [92] "If a phenomenon assists social progress, helps bring out human powers and capabilities, then aesthetically it stands out as a beautiful [phenomenon]". [93]

Such metaphorical declarations regarding the essence of an aesthetic

phenomenon would be less difficult to comprehend and accept (as a philosophy of art) if they were not saddled with the further burden of supposedly being the explication of the 'content' of a property, resp. quality standing either in a natural or a socialized natural form of a physical object. Vanslov's succinct formula captures the essence of the problem: "The beautiful is essentially nothing else but sensibly perceived freedom."[94] Vanslov takes very seriously the root meaning of the expression 'aiesthesis' (sense impressions) and merely combines it with elements from Marxist-Leninist moral-ethical theory as well as from the theory of labor, labeling the whole thus realized the 'beautiful'.

None of the foregoing texts say *what* the beautiful is, i.e. they do not strictly speaking define it, but instead offer theories in terms which are not first inspected for their intrinsic aesthetic significance and which at best specify how something is thought to *become* beautiful, what the genesis of the beautiful in an object is. Although the societalists were adamantly opposed to recognizing any extra-socio-human natural beauty, a controversy did arise among them as to whether the distinction between *krasota* and *prekrasnoe* had any sense.

True to his brand of societalism Gol'dentrixt refused to allow natural beauty to be considered under the essence of the beautiful.

> It is mistaken to consider in nature 'primordial' desposits of properties of beauty and to biologize man's aesthetic experience, i.e. to identify, for example, the beautiful with the sensibly pleasureful, for in that case the social essence of the aesthetic relation is lost.[95]

Pursuing this logic, Gol'dentrixt pointed out correctly that a position like that represented by Stolovič, Vanslov and Borev, which put a social content into a natural form, is tantamount to the admission that, for example, the tragic and the comic exist 'in' nature.[96] In his first major study Stolovič indeed sounds nearly like a naturist when he distinguishes between the external form and the internal content in terms of *krasota* and *prekrasnoe* respectively. The latter is the central category, the most positive form of man's self-assertion in reality. Formal beauty (*krasota*) characterizes the external aesthetic significance of the exterior sides of an object, while the beautiful in the genuine sense characterizes the object as a whole (not just its 'interior' essence) in its relation to the social relations.[97] After 1961, when he altered his position so as to include the form of the aesthetic property in the system of social relations, Stolovič seems to have dropped his distinction between *krasota* and *prekrasnoe*. Although he rejected 'natural' beauty, his arguments now took on greater force. Were natural beauty to exist, says

Stolovič, either it would have to be affirmed that everything in nature is beautiful or else criteria would have to be found to say why of two things that share, e.g. the same formal qualities one is and the other is not beautiful.[98] But elementary dialectics casts off the first possibility because the assertion 'everything' in nature is beautiful' turns into its opposite, viz. the liquidation of the beautiful in nature since the beautiful can exist only in relative opposition to the ugly, the repulsive, etc.[99] Hence it must be that form is sociologized too, that of the same formal qualities in two objects one or both are beautiful only in relation to the fashion in which the human social essence is embodied in them thanks to the labor expended in them.[100] Stolovič allows that without the mediation of labor the human subject might obtain a certain amount of sensible pleasure based on biologico-physiological factors in correspondence with the determinations of the object. But this is not genuine aesthetic interaction with the world, which becomes possible only after appropriation of the object through labor for human ends and purposes.

Stolovič was not on firm ground here, even from the point of view of his own doctrines. Earlier it had been seen that it followed from his views that even untransformed nature took on aesthetic significance simply by being subject to the same general laws that man appropriated when transforming certain objects around him through labor. Similarly, therefore, Stolovič ought to allow the perception of natural beauty in untransformed nature even if the possibility of this perception depends on the prior perception of socio-human 'man-made' beauty. Stolovič and the other societalists also neglected to tie in their theory of aesthetic categories with the more general and fundamental doctrine of aesthetic properties. In particular no attempt was made to deal with the important question as to how the different aesthetic contents denoted by the categories were formally differentiated, i.e. whether different formal 'qualities' were required to bear the differentiated social contents. Given Gol'dentrixt's extreme sociologism, the question would have little significance for him: everything in the aesthetic situation depended on man. The remaining societalists however should have studied the question how a particular natural form carries the beautiful while another carries the sublime, etc.[101]

Of the societalists only Stolovič consistently applied his doctrine to develop a theory of the unity in multiplicity of the aesthetic categories. This is somewhat surprising since Borev wrote a comprehensive treatise explicitly devoted to the subject. Unfortunately, the little he could say on the subjcet is inconsistent. On one hand, he reacts against the view that the aesthetic

categories are modifications, or varieties of the beautiful. On the other hand, although he proclaims their autonomy, Borev insists that the aesthetic categories are closely interrelated thanks to their general dependence on the beautiful.[102] To explain this, however, he relies on the *passe-partout* of Marxist-Leninist philosophy – the dialectic – in order to assert that "like the categories of the dialectic the aesthetic categories must be mobile, flexible, interconnected, for otherwise they do not grasp and veridically reflect the world".[103] Thereupon he proceeds in a completely arbitrary fashion to define a series of supposedly related categories. In comparison, Stolovič provides a clear principle for categorical analysis in aesthetics.

> The unity of the diverse aesthetic properties consists in their being either a direct or indirect affirmation of the beautiful. This is the case because the aesthetic property of a phenomenon characterizes its determinate relation to historical development and classifies the given relation from the point of view of progressive social development. Insofar as such a development . . . constitutes the content of the beautiful, then the ugly, the comic, tragic, etc. in phenomena characterize the relation of these phenomena to the beautiful.[104]

It is to be noted that Stolovič does not say that lack of development or the absence of those factors which make possible the manifestation of the wealth of the human essence, etc. is equivalent, e.g. to the ugly or the comic, etc. Such an absence or lack would rather signal the complete absence of any aesthetic property at all, the liquidation of the beautiful as Stolovič said in a text cited above. The ugly, etc. is present only where there is beauty; it stands in relative opposition to it and indeed makes it worth fighting for by highlighting its perfection. It is this 'fight' among other things which contributes to the unfolding of the cornucopian wealth of the human essence in social labor. Stolovič's text hides rather than reveals the principle of unity of the aesthetic categories. The beautiful is tied to a conception of the human social essence that makes of it an ideal to be realized, guiding the progressive movement of history, giving it an immanent sense; the ugly, the comic,etc. are expressions in one form of the real, actual oppositions and obstacles that hinder (or contribute to, as in the case of the lofty or the sublime) the realization of this ideal in man's appropriation of world through labor. What the Soviets in this context call the dialectic of the ideal and the real, or the material and the spiritual, is in fact the tension between the 'is' and the 'ought', between 'fact' and 'value', translated into the language of aesthetics but carrying all the moralistic, revolutionary force that the distinction first received in the Marxist ideology of the class struggle.[105]

Because all the aesthetic categories are related to man's historical progress,

all of them are actually confirmations of the beautiful. The ugly, for example, is attached to an object or phenomenon which is doomed to destruction in the course of historical development and by this very fact confirms the beautiful. The tragic in Marxist-Leninist aesthetics is also a confirmation of the beautiful because it highlights the struggle of the old and the new and the inevitable triumph of the latter.

> When the individual participants of the struggle for the new are destroyed, those beautiful human qualities, which conditioned the participation of these people in the struggle determined their addition to the present for future victory of the new are confirmed in the tragedy of their (the people's – E.S.) destruction.[106]

The comic has several forms – the humorous, satiric, ironic, etc. – although they share a common trait, viz. a socially perceivable contradiction, a socially significant lack of correspondence of end-means, form-content, event-circumstances, essence-its manifestations, which are rejected in the name of the beautiful. According to Marx, "History is thorough and goes through many phases when carrying an old form to the grave. The last phase of a world historical form is its *comedy*".[107] By laughing (?) people shed the old form easily, seeing in it a hindrance to the newly emergent, life-confirming form of society.[108]

Examples abound of this sort of 'analysis'. Neither the societalists nor the naturist theory of the categories provides a particularly illuminating reason why just these and not some other categories had to be considered as aesthetic categories. In spite of all the proclamations about their specificity it remains unclear just what distinguishes the aesthetic in a social context from the moral, the ethical. For his part, W. Tatarkiewicz follows Max Scheler who 'convincingly' showed that the tragic is an ethical category, while humour, the comic, is a moral attitude.[109] It is nevertheless true that tragic and comic situations are a natural theme for the dramatic arts. Thanks also to the central place their analysis occupied in Aristotle's *Poetics* these categories have come to have important status in aesthetics. It nevertheless remains true that to the extent that such categories are associated in Marxist-Leninist aesthetics with the beautiful, to that extent the beautiful itself is obscured by an extraneous social theory imposed on the aesthetic phenomenon for the sake of maintaining a consistent world view.

The upshot of all these speculations about the socio-historical essence of the aesthetic categories is that their content is relative. In the first place this conclusion follows from the sense of the basic formula of the societalists, namely, man's aesthetic appropriation of reality. The appropriation is a

continual process, taking place in and through labor, which over the course of time widens the sphere of human effectiveness in the world. Secondly, because the appropriation is always and only social, what is aesthetic reflects the degree to which the human essence has been freely embodied in the world and the degree to which its possibilities have been developed. This relativism does not fly in the face of the much-touted objectivity of the aesthetic properties, as these are understood by the societalists. Even if the aesthetic could not exist independently, it was completely objective vis-à-vis any single member of that society.[110] In the end the objectivity of the aesthetic and any of its more specific forms is equivalent to the objectivity of a historical period defined by a quality attaching to every part of the contemporary life, e.g. capitalism, a quality characterizing virtually the entire system of social relations. In the same way, the relativism is an affirmation of the significance of the historical process. It is a process in which society, as Marx affirmed, sets itself only those tasks which it can carry out and understands itself accordingly in function of the route it has so far travelled. The theory is historist in this sense and depends on the identification of objectivity with social objectivity rooted in the transformatory practice of social labor.

4.3. THE AESTHETIC RELATION

4.31. Fluidity of the Concept

According to the logic of the Soviet argument presented in the preceding chapter, a detailed description of the aesthetic attitude, i.e. the subjective side of the aesthetic phenomenon, was possible only after the objective side had first been described and explained. On this score no differences of opinion existed among Soviet aestheticians; this point of view was virtually a matter of principle following from the postulates of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in general.

Yet the essential question about the nature of the aesthetic naturally had a direct effect on the conception of the aesthetic attitude. Despite their internal differences the societalists all maintained that man's aesthetic relation was summed up in the concept of aesthetic appropriation (*osvoenie*). Accordingly, under the concept 'man's aesthetic relation to reality' the societalists understood, first of all, the entire aesthetic phenomenon, embracing both the objective and the subjective facets. However, in order to distinguish the properly subjective aspect of the aesthetic phenomenon the societalists also spoke of man's aesthetic relation. The expression 'relation' is most significant

in this context. By 'relation' the Soviet philosophers seemed to understand an ensemble of socially mediated psychological and behavioral traits adapted to certain features of certain objects or to a domain of objects in extraconscious material reality. Examples of such 'subjective' relations include, in the terms employed by the Soviets, utilitarian-practical, scientifico-cognitive, moral-ethical, religious and aesthetic relations. Some of these are directed to things, some to interactions among men and at least one (the religious attitude) to a fantastical, chimerical object. The philosophical problem in this regard was the following: how were man's multiple relations to reality differentiated; what was the specific difference that set the properly aesthetic relation to reality apart from the other relations of man of reality?; what were the historical and functional reasons for the emergence of the aesthetic attitude?

The societalists felt that man's appropriation of reality through labor lay at the basis of all these relations. In order to discover what the aesthetic relation is it was necessary to determine how human appropriation of reality on the basis of labor took so many different forms. On this point the naturists took exception to the societalists' view of the nature of appropriation and the fashion in which this conception was employed to explain the aesthetic. In the end this difference came down to a clash of conceptions about the nature and place of labor in the general question of the relation of man and the world.

Beyond this, however, the naturist conception did not differ in any essential respects from that of the societalists. That is to say, without employing the concept of appropriation the naturists spoke of the aesthetic relation to reality, distinguishing it from other relations by the same behavioral and psychological traits that the societalists elaborated in their conception. Besides dealing with the nature of aesthetic perception and taste, the Soviet account of the aesthetic attitude revolves around the harmonization of the key psychic 'faculties' – reason, volition and affectivity – the 'whole man'. Behaviorally, such a 'synthetic' attitude expresses itself in non-utilitarian purposive activity which employs material objects and their forms to serve as the bearers of an 'idea', a socio-human content. In this connection it was imperative to demarcate clearly aesthetic creativity from labor, even if the former had its origins in the latter and retained certain of its essential features. Finally, under the notion of the aesthetic ideal the naturists and the societalists alike treated issues associated with aesthetic evaluation and judgement.

4.32. Appropriation vs. Cognition

The societalists' conception of the appropriation of reality cannot be divorced

from their interpretation of Marx's texts about human objectification and the humanization of nature in and through labor, texts contained in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. Since an analysis of this interpretation has been reserved for the next chapter, only the main outlines of the general argument will be presented here.

The societalists hardly bothered to define their terms, especially concepts of such central importance for their doctrine as 'appropriation'. It is easiest to understand this concept by turning to critical remarks of opponents.

S. M. Permjakov understood the societalists' conception of appropriation to signify that the subject exerts a direct influence on the object by bringing to the object an 'apriori' aesthetic factor.[111] Such a doctrine is clearly opposed to the Leninist doctrine according to which it is the object, reality, which exerts an effect on the subject. Permjakov feels that the term 'appropriation' is equivocal in the societalist vocabulary, because it means both transformation and cognition of reality with the stress on the former.[122] But the proper view is that man can transform reality only after cognizing its laws and regularities.[113] M. F. Ovsjannikov calls for the removal of the expression 'appropriation' from the vocabulary of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics because the term obscures the social, class content of man's aesthetic relation to reality and neglects the cognitive dimension of the aesthetic attitude accentuated by Lenin.[114]

Several years after the societalist-naturist controversy had relaxed, A. F. Eremeev defended the term on the following ground: 'Appropriation' does not contradict 'reflection'; not only does the former contain the latter, but it alone does justice to the richness of the aesthetic phenomenon by including human feelings, thoughts, needs, 'essential powers', the transformation and assimilation of reality to man's needs, etc.[115] Eremeev is clearly aware that the stress on cognition, especially if it is interpreted as a passive reflection, falsifies the aesthetic relation of man to reality. "To the extent that it (aesthetics – E. S.) concerns gnoseology this term (appropriation – E. S.) underlines the fact that aesthetic cognition is not passive, contemplative, but active . . ."[116]

Enough has been said to make it clear that orthodox Marxist-Leninists distrusted the concept of appropriation because it seemed to them to falsify the concept of reflection in the theory of knowledge. Lenin's passing remark that cognition involved not only reflection but creation too failed to solve the philosophical problem. It was a question of priorities: which comes first, appropriation in the sense of transformation or cognition as the comprehension of the essences of things? The opponents of the societalists suspected

that the latter subordinated cognition to appropriation, that man cognized what he had first transformed, whereas it was essential, they felt, to maintain the reverse, that man could transform only what he had first cognized, even if practical concerns had originally motivated his cognitive interest.[117]

The question was complicated even further by the role assigned to labor in the explanation of man's multiple relations to reality. Marxism-Leninism universally maintains that all of man's fundamental ties with reality emerged and developed in and through his labor. Repeated by all writers without cease in one form or another, the scheme for the emergence and development of the aesthetic sense took the following form.

– labor was orginally an activity assuring the satisfaction of man's basic needs;

– in producing tools man gave proof of this knowledge of the properties of materials suited to the transformation and appropriation of other materials directly required by the human being;

– such knowledge was increasingly divorced from narrow practical needs and considered for itself, e.g. the formal qualities of the materials employed by man were brought into relief and consistently incorporated into tool production in the guise of ornamentation

– the more removed the knowledge of such properties and qualities became from the production of immediately useful objects the more men could liberate, develop and express spiritual energies which develop them as human beings; in this way the aesthetic sense was gradually perfected until it attained its highest realization in the purposeful activity of artistic creativity.

This explanatory scheme is constructed in such a way as to raise the question whether there is not only a historically, i.e. genetic, but a logically necessary connection between the emergence of cognition and the aesthetic relation to reality.[118] The naturists would have it that the aesthetic relation is possible only on the basis of man's practical-intellectual appropriation of the aesthetic properties of reality. The aesthetic relation to reality is possible if and only if man understands the aesthetic qualities of the formal, generic properties, interconnections and interactivities, etc. characterizing the objects of his activity in a fashion completely independent of his activity. They do not become aesthetic because man employs these qualities, etc. in a certain way, thereby revealing a side of himself rather than of the objects, but because they are aesthetic in essence and help to bring out in man a new attitude.

The societalist perspective on similar schemes underlines the dialectic of freedom and necessity implicitly contained in such schemes. Through his labor man comes increasingly to liberate himself from the control of forces he

did not previously comprehend. His knowledge of nature's laws and regularities is a measure of *his* freedom to pursue humanly significant ends, i.e. it is a measure of his knowledge of himself and his own "essential powers as a natural being". By being able to ferret out all that is essential about an object in its wholeness and not just in virtue of those of its parts which may be vitally significant for his life, man affirms himself over the object and is thus able to transform it. In other words, concrete sensible activity which is not aimed at the satisfaction of basic needs is ultimately the expression of the human being *in his relationship to himself* through nature which is but a means to this end. Because this activity is at the same time a synthesis of all sides of man's spiritual-psychic life (his intellectual, volitional and affective 'faculties'), it is aesthetic activity. Although there is a historical connection between the cognition of the laws of nature and the emergence of the aesthetic relation, there is no necessary relation between them for the societalists. Since nature is otherwise bereft of autonomous aesthetic properties, understanding the vital significance its properties have for man is no more than a condition for the free exercise of man's imagination, etc. in the perpetuation of an activity creative of a human world. The foregoing represents the ideal the societalists seem to have set themselves for aesthetic theory or rather for their philosophy of aesthetics; their expression of this ideal rarely if ever took this form, for the reason that it could be interpreted as teetering in the direction of a heretical doctrine.

None of the above advances the understanding of the aesthetic experience, being rather a theory designed to accomodate conflicting sides of the Marxist-Leninist legacy. In point of fact these remarks are so far little more than redundant reformulations of the basic doctrines regarding the nature of the aesthetic as such.

4.33. The Specificity of the Aesthetic Relation

Apart from the differences concerning the underlying sense and function of the aesthetic attitude in man's life, Soviet aestheticians were on the whole of one mind concerning the specific traits of the aesthetic experience, psychologically speaking. For the sake of convenience we shall in this section deal with the receptive components of the aesthetic experience, leaving questions about evaluation and judgment for the next section.

It is difficult to situate the Soviet theory of aesthetic experience in comparing it with the tradition.[119] On the negative side all manner of subjectivist theories (psychologism, conventionalism) are categorically rejected. Thus the greater part of the theorizing of the Enlightenment, especially in England

(Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Burke, Hume) concerning taste is rejected. All psychological theories of the aesthetic categories, i.e. theories seeking the essence of an aesthetic quality by the analysis of the characteristics of the experience (pleasure, pain, etc.) were outrightly rejected. Closer to the Soviet spirit are eighteenth century German theories, e.g. that of Baumgarten for whom the aesthetic sense is a type of cognition, though exclusively sensible (*representatio sensitiva*) and of a very low grade because of its 'indistinctness'. Much is revealed about the Soviet theory through their attitude to Kant's synthesis of the British and German doctrines. Agreeing with Kant's view that the aesthetic sense is a specific sense, they reject his claim that its determining principle is solely subjective. Neither do they accept his doctrines that the aesthetic experience is disinterested, free of any admixture of conceptual knowledge and concerned exclusively with the form of a thing. For different reasons, however, they concur with Kant in his view that aesthetic pleasure is rooted in a synthesis of the several faculties of mind, viz. imagination and reason, to which the Soviets add still other 'faculties'. Finally, like Kant, they propose theories which try to provide for the necessity and universality of aesthetic evaluations, theories adapted to their historiosophical conceptions. Theories of the last one hundred years are considered to be false; hedonism (Santayana), illusionism (Lange, von Hartmann, Meinong, Geiger, *et al.*) the *Einfühlung* theory (Vischer, Lotze, Lipps), the various theories of contemplation (the isolation theory, the theory of psychical distance, the Gestalt theory) are all discounted as idealisms.

Indeed, if their theory can be positively compared with any others, the Soviet theory comes closest to doctrines from antiquity and the Renaissance, according to which the aesthetic experience is a type of cognition based on the senses and affording a particular emotional reaction. However, everything in the Soviet theory is complicated by their adherence to three principle features of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in general:

(1) the dialectic;
(2) sociology;
(3) the theory of knowledge.

In the first case it is a question not so much of oppositions as of discovering couplets of elements, e.g. the aesthetic sense is described as a unity of the sensible and rational, the emotional and the intellectual, etc. It is not made clear whether in relation to these the aesthetic sense is derivative or just as primary as they. In the second case, aesthetic experience is immediately set within the context of a general theory of its genesis in social labor. This aspect of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine explains the refusal to disassociate the

aesthetic sense from practical matters wholly or to explain it exclusively in either biological or spiritual terms. The third aspect involves Soviet aestheticians in protracted efforts to compare aesthetic cognition with scientific cognition. As a result, Soviet aestheticians have had a notoriously difficult time in coping with subjective factors of the aesthetic relation, e.g. expression, creativity, imagination, emotion, because they constitute distortions of cognition.

4.331. *Characteristic features of the aesthetic experience.* According to the Soviet accounts of the aesthetic experience during the period under examination here, it has the following facets:

1. it is a synthesis of sensible-rational-emotive attitudes,
2. it is always directed to an object as a whole,
3. it is based on a creative, organic unity with its object,
4. it is closely interrelated with man's other relations to reality.

(*Ad 1*) A. I. Burov, following Černyševskij, had insisted that the aesthetic experience has to do with "the ensemble of activities, of all forces and capacities of the living man".[120] The aesthetic experience occurs when the wholeness of life is mirrored in consciousness, a mirroring which unites the material and the spiritual, the corporeal and the psychical. Accordingly, the aesthetic experience was to be characterized as the synthesis of the senses, reason and the emotions.[121] Stolovič neatly improved on Burov's theory thanks to his own theory of the aesthetic properties. Recalling that an aesthetic property is composed of a socialised natural, formal, and a socio-human content, Stolovič proceeded to operate a type of synthesis between Kantianism and Marxism-Leninism. The form of the aesthetic property is perceivable directly by the senses (so much from Kant). But the content is grasped by the intellect, not separately to be sure in conceptual form, but concretely, i.e. through images carrying the general sense of the aesthetic property, the whole thing suffused with emotional tones.[122] The reason for this complex process is merely that the aesthetic property embodies "man's spirtual affirmation in the real world, a joyful experience of his human possibilities and powers, capacities for creation, the sense of freedom".[123] "Man's aesthetic relation to reality is a holistic (*celostnoe*), sensible, imagistic and ideative emotional relation, spiritually affirming man in reality".[124] Because the aesthetic property is expressive of the wealth of the human social essence, only man's combined psychic powers and spiritual energies can do it justice.

We here come back to the dispute between Vanslov and Stolovič, discussed in Section 4.12 over the use of the terms 'property' or 'quality' to denote the

object of the aesthetic relation. It is now somewhat clearer why the latter preferred the concept 'property'. A quality characterizes an object as a substantial entity and raises the question whether ordinary sense perception will be sufficient to grasp the aesthetic quality in the sense defined. A property, however, is always the relation a thing or phenomenon has to something else. In the case of the aesthetic property it is a question of the relation of the thing to the ensemble of social relations, i.e. in Marxist terms, to the human essence. Being at once individual and collective, historically relative and universal, this essence can only be perceived by a suitably complex process of reflection, which sense perception cannot possibly hope to fulfill.

Dmitrieva and the other naturists provide much less explicit statements, although they all tend in the same direction. Although the naturists rejected the concepts of a social content of the aesthetic properties, the relational aspect of the aesthetic, especially to man, was not absent in their thinking. Instead of speaking about the relation of a thing to human society, the naturists, as we saw, underscored the universal interconnection of all things. Consequently, their theory of the aesthetic experience resembled that of the societalists in that they too rejected the idea that sense experience alone was sufficient to grasp the aesthetic properties of reality. The harmony, symmetry, etc. of an object were directly sensibly perceived, but their content as aesthetic properties was accessible intellectually and consisted of the universal interconnection and life-confirming forces of nature.[125] Because this comprehension included an awareness of man's place in the order of things – as the highest organization of matter and in turn an organizing force in his own right – an aesthetic experience always involved an emotional element in the sense that every object was of positive or negative significance in man's life. Dmitrieva draws the line here between scientific cognition and the aesthetic experience. Both obey the laws of objective cognition, but aesthetic experience is guided by a sensible striving (*čuvstvo-stremlenie*) to achieve man's truth in the world, a striving which orients the intellect and the will in a certain direction.[126] In other words, like the societalists, the naturists required a totalizing reaction of the whole man, but in their case the essence of the aesthetic is equivalent to the universal interconnection of life-affirming things and phenomena, including man himself. It is evident how the lack of insight into the axiological dimensions of aesthetics needlessly complicated the form and expression of Soviet aesthetic theory.

(*Ad 2*) The aesthetic experience is always related to a whole object, never to just a part or to an isolated property thereof.[127] This requirement can be translated into different terms: the aesthetic experience is always directed to

what the object as a whole expresses. In the societalist theory the aesthetic object expresses the human essence because the whole object has been included in social relations favorable to the positive unfolding of the human essence. In the naturist theory, the entire object is symmetrical, harmonious, etc. and expresses the degree to which it bears nature's life-giving laws in it. This requirement is merely the converse of the preceding point; the 'whole' subject requires the 'whole' object, in the aesthetic relation.

An interesting detail of this doctrine is provided by studying this requirement from the point of view of the genesis of the aesthetic relation in labor. In order to be dealt with aesthetically, i.e. as a sensible, concrete whole manifesting some intellectually accessible content, the object cannot be subject to a transformatory practice which violates its essence or removes it from its natural system of relations. G. Nedošivin speaks about the 'practical-intellectual' attitude to things, whereby nothing is abstracted from the object, nothing is transformed in it, since a transformation of a part always affects the whole.[128] It might seem as if Nedošivin is proposing a theory of aesthetic contemplation in spite of his societalist theory of aesthetic appropriation. According to the *Osnovy*,

> The aesthetic appropriation of the world gives us a fund of knowledge and experience about real things, events and phenomena in their *concrete wholeness*, i.e. in the form in which we come in contact with them in living, unmediated practice in life itself.[129]

However, the expression 'practical' throws into relief the fact that the object is always 'totally' transformed the moment it enters the human field of vision.[130] For the societalists it was a question of affirming the human essence in and through labor and of discovering the laws of beauty contained in the ideal of human freedom embodied in knowledgeable and purposeful activity.

(*Ad 3*) According to A. N. Iezuitov, the aesthetic relation to reality ". . . is the relation of an immanent organic unity with the object, as far removed from an abstract contemplative harmony with it as from an arbitrary manipulation (*narušenie*) of it own dialectic".[131] Such an organic unity is called by others a creative relationship with the object. " . . . the connection of man with the exterior milieu, the correlation of subject and object in practice . . . is creativity".[132] It is the result of a purposeful transfomation of the world in which man's aims, goals are 'reified' (*oveščestvlenie*) in a thing. The object becomes a reflection of man's activity, of his ideas, feelings, desires. In short, man sees himself in the fruits of his labor.

To prevent misunderstandings, it should be stressed here that creativity is not an arbitrary process for Soviet aestheticians. Although man's activity is

humanly purposeful it is founded on his knowledge of nature's laws. The difference between the schools is, to repeat, that in one case man attempts to display and eventually recreate those qualities and properties of things which in his practice he has discovered to be aesthetically valent; in the other, man realizes his own essence by employing nature's means to that effect.[133] At this level of the analysis of the aesthetic relation, however, it is not yet a question of artistic creativity.

In an article entitled 'Estetičeskoe kak otnošenie' (The Aesthetic as a Relation) F. D. Kondratenko attempted to throw cold water on these ideas.[134] According to him, the societalist theories, or those stressing man's aesthetic appropriation of reality, want to account for the aesthetic experience by defining the interdependency of the concepts 'appropriation', 'cognition', 'consciousness', 'relation'. Kondratenko of course agrees that through labor man really appropriates the real world, i.e. he sets forth and employs those qualities and properties of objects which they possess and which satisfy an essential need. Strictly speaking, however, in learning how best to employ those qualities, man adapts himself to the object. Man 'appropriates' the object only in the sense that of all the qualities of a thing *only some* are vitally significant for him at any given time in his life.[135] Over the course of time man's needs have changed and so consequently has the extent of the vitally necessary properties of objects entering into his field of vision. Kondratenko does not allow that the object is ever wholly appropriated; its essence can always be made subject to further scrutiny. But when aestheticians add that man also 'spiritually' appropriates the world, Kondratenko takes them to mean that instead of reflecting reality, consciousness is now reflected by reality. Far from being a result of labor, aesthetic consciousness has here become something added to labor, becoming its orienting force and the condition of the human comprehension of the world.[136]

Stefan Morawski, in his book about this period in Soviet aesthetics,[137] makes similar observations, but in less obtuse language. He arrives at the conclusion that despite their belief to the contrary, Soviet aestheticians determine the aesthetic quality by the aesthetic experience, something which clearly contradicts the entire Soviet frame of reference. That is aesthetic which incites us to react with the totality of our being, calling forth a strong emotional reaction.[138] But if this is the criterion for recognizing the aesthetic object, we can only characterize the features of the aesthetic object in terms of the components of the experience itself. Morawski's point is certainly well taken with regard to texts like the following by S. S. Gol'dentrixt. The aesthetic relation, according to Gol'dentrixt

> . . . has an objective and a subjective aspect; objectively, aesthetic sensibility emerges as an affirmation of creative, potential freedom and the fullness of life-activity in labor; subjectively, as an enjoyment of the unalienated fruits of constructive labor and social appropriation of the world.[139]

To the extent that this theory proposes itself for consideration as an 'objectivist' theory, the circle is closed: man sees himself enjoying himself in the free "play of his physical and intellectual powers". On one hand, it remains completely arbitrary to call such an experience 'aesthetic experience', because to the degree that man adopts such self-fulfilling attitudes towards the most diverse objects of his activity everything can come to have an aesthetic character for him. On the other hand, this approach fails to answer the question why men came to treat certain properties of objects as aesthetic in the first place. To say that such and such properties are aesthetic while others are definitely not aesthetic, especially if the criterion for so doing is the experience of self-fulfillment, is arbitrary and purely *a priori* according to Morawski.

(*Ad 4*) Finally, the view that in his aesthetic relation to reality man is not isolated from other relations to reality presents no special difficulties or surprises.[140] The force of this argument carries over to the genetic and functional issues. Genetically, all of man's relations to reality have their roots in labor and each reflects a side of the human essence as it is developed and mediated in a social context. The aesthetic relation is a privileged relation because it takes up the totality of man's being, the ensemble of forms of social consciousness to the extent that all together they express the integrity of the human essence. In their social context, furthermore, these relations do not go beyond the point of view of a class. The truth of the aesthetic experience of objective reality is partially founded on the degree to which the overall ideological consciousness corresponds to or falsifies the true nature of things. But this is tantamount to saying that the degree to which the human essence has found the possibility to bring to fruition its latent, potential powers in the social context is the degree of the truth-value of the corresponding aesthetic experience.[141] We shall return to the problem of the truth-value of aesthetic perceptions in an ideological framework below, especially in the section devoted to the question of the specificity of art.

According to the Soviets, bourgeois theories consider that the aesthetic relation is an innate psychic, spiritual or even biological capacity, isolated from other human sensibilities and capacities. But the truth is that the aesthetic attitude arises on the basis of a dialectic of natural and historical factors, always and everywhere reflecting man's simultaneous discovery of the world and of himself. The aesthetic sense has its 'premisses' in natural, biological

properties, but it arose only in a socio-historical process of practical interactivity of man and nature. In this way it ceased to be natural and took on a qualitatively new, social-historical nature.[142]

In this connection the Soviets loudly proclaim that, given the origin of the aesthetic relation in labor, the first aesthetic perceptions were closely tied up with practical needs, e.g. in tool production. Although the aesthetic sense does not satisfy vital needs, it is nevertheless related to man's life, fulfilling certain necessary functions; hence it is not 'disinterested'. Tatarkiewicz gently reminds proponents of similar views that the theory of a disinterested aesthetic attitude does not deny that aesthetic experiences provide man with some practical benefits. All this theory asserts is that man *cannot think* about these practical benefits and at the same time have an aesthetic experience; in this minimal sense every aesthetic experience is disinterested.[143]

4.34. Aesthetic Evaluation and Judgement

Soviet aestheticians have always been determined opponents of psychological relativism as well as of dogmatic absolutism in questions of aesthetic evaluation and judgement. By employing their historiosophical doctrine they have attempted to provide their own version of the claim that aesthetic judgements are characterized by necessity and universality. However, it is one thing to report these facts and quite another to provide an adequate account of their leading ideas on this subject. There are several reasons for this.

First, during the period under examination here the overwhelming interest given to the problem of the common essence of aesthetic qualities and the specificity of art prevented close scrutiny of questions associated with criteria of evaluation and judgement. Particularly noticeable among the aestheticians of the period was the absence of any clear conception of aesthetics as an axiological discipline.

Secondly, the discussion of evaluation and judgement took place in solidly traditional terms, viz. by employing the psychologistic language of aesthetic sense, taste and judgement. This framework was ill-suited for being integrated with a socio-historical theory of consciousness, on one hand, and an objectivist doctrine of aesthetic properties *qua* ontic features of extra-conscious entities, on the other. Traditional psychological theories of taste were narrowly construed on the basis of individual experiences of pleasure or displeasure, depended on sensualist epistemologies and usually rejected the objective existence of aesthetic qualities. Marxism-Leninism, with its insistence on the universal force of social factors on the formation of individual consciousness tacitly discounts the significance of personal experiences in theories of

evaluation and judgement. Hence it supplants individual by 'social psychology', which in fact makes it hard to see what sense and value analyses of aesthetic taste could have for Soviet aestheticians.[144] At best, empirical sociological studies of conventionally delimited group-tastes could shed some light on certain common features of aesthetic experiences shared by different groups. However, it is hard to see how such an approach could satisfactorily provide criteria for aesthetic evaluations, especially as there is no guarantee that fluctuations of taste from one group to another will not be too great to permit any far-reaching conclusions about aesthetic taste in general. An objectivist theory of aesthetic properties should be primarily concerned with the truth-value of propositions about aesthetic objects. Reports about the state of the experiencing subject would clearly be secondary and of no direct consequence in trying to establish the truth or falsehood of a statement that a given thing '*x*' is beautiful or ugly. And it is here, moreover, that the sociological conditioning of the subject's experiences would even preclude serious treatment of the subject's account of *his* own experiences. In the last paragraph we saw that doubt was thrown on the Soviet attempts to carry out satisfactory investigations of the aesthetic experience. It may be that excessive fear of 'gnoseologism' drove them in the direction of sociology, but the lack of a suitable conceptual apparatus prevented them from clarifying all the particulars of their problematic.

In any case 'analysis' of the psychological factors of evaluation and judgement were commonly disposed of in a few cursory remarks in favor of extended disquisitions on the nature and importance of the so-called aesthetic ideal. Considered as a synthesis of everything described under the general heading 'man's aesthetic relation to reality' the aesthetic ideal was, as has already been mentioned, the dialectic of fact and value inscribed into the Marxist-Leninist historigraphy and eschatology. The relevance of these disquisitions for the theory of socialist realism remains beyond question. For these discussions became the arena for applauding idle, passing remarks by the classics on various and sundry artistic themes as well as the ideological statements of cultural policy handed down by Soviet leaders and the party ideologues. On this basis the aestheticians were in a position to provide not only criteria of evaluation – criteria drawn from political and social life – by which to judge contemporary and past art, but also the exact outlines of the content of genuine art as well as the proper attitude to adopt in 'receiving' this content, in appreciating it by society as a whole (i.e. classless socialist-Communist society). Soviet aesthetics rose finally like a great crescendo to the peaks of the heroic victory of the working masses building socialism, finding

in that struggle the principal criterion of aesthetic worth and excellence, be it of natural beauty or works of art.[145]

4.341. *Aesthetic Taste and Judgement.* It is difficult if not impossible to find satisfactory definitions of the concepts in question in the works of the period under examination. Major authors from both schools simply did not bother to explain how they understood their terms, and in some cases (e.g. in Vanslov's study on the beautiful) a chapter occurs on evaluation of the beautiful in which the 'mechanism' of evaluation is never fully analysed and interpreted. Instead extraneous discussions about the socio-historical 'causes' of certain aesthetic tastes supervene. Even a text like the *Osnovy*, in a chapter devoted expressly to the aesthetic relation, fails to mention, never mind deal with, problems of evaluation, aesthetic taste, etc. All that is discussed there is the pleasure a man feels when in the products of his labor he sees not his subjective caprices but the fulfillment of reality's objective requirements.[146] The *Kratikij slovar' po estetike* does provide some definitions, although these are circular. According to this source, the aesthetic taste is a man's capacity to understand and evaluate the aesthetic features of the objects and phenomena of nature and social life. Together with the aesthetic sense, ideals and theories, the aesthetic taste is a form of the aesthetic cognition of reality. It takes the form of 'direct evaluations', not theoretical judgements. An evaluation is circularly defined by the same source as a judgement which is an evaluation, either simply affirming the beauty of an object or providing a theoretical demonstration why a given object ought to be regarded as beautiful.[147] The most significant element of all these notions is the view that the truth or falsehood of an aesthetic evaluation (resp. judgement) depends on the degree of development and the rectitude of an aesthetic taste. G. Pospelov devoted considerable space to this problematic.

It is Pospelov's opinion that 'social-taste evaluations' (*social'no-vkusovye ocenki*) do not proceed from acquaintance with the objective aesthetic properties of things. They spring up on the basis of diverse likes, fears, desires, hopes, formed in determinate ethnic, national, historical circumstances.[148] Pospelov, who is otherwise vehemently opposed to the societalist theories, finds that he can put them to good use at this level. For it is indeed the case that an aesthetic evaluation of this kind is determined by the role an object plays in the social system. The evaluation can change the moment the social system undergoes a change or the object gains or loses significance within the given social system. Such taste evaluations are in fact either the confirmation or rejection of the whole structure of social life; they are

ideological in nature, being the expression of the system of class relations, etc.[149]

Yet social taste evaluations must be distinguished from genuine aesthetic evaluations, more exactly from aesthetic cognition, springing up on the basis of a knowledge of the generic, essential properties of phenomena.[150] But here Pospelov adds that such aesthetic cognition *stricto sensu* can arise only on the basis of aesthetic taste. Hence the question boils down to ascertaining the degree to which "aesthetic tastes make it possible for people (. . .) to attain a higher level of relatively objective aesthetic cognition of life".[151] The aesthetic taste of the primitive hunter, for example, is determined by his mythic consciousness of nature in relation to society. If he adorns himself with the spoils of his hunt (teeth, claws, skins, etc.) in order to symbolize the qualities of courage, fearlessness, etc. his mythically determined aesthetic taste nevertheless comes close to an affirmation of properties that objectively characterize the perfection of man's being. If, on the contrary, he assumes certain dress styles for the sake of showing his superior class – social position, styles that hinder his physical movements and diminish rather than increase his social effectiveness – his aesthetic taste is in fact removed from the objective cognition of aesthetic properties, e.g. the natural beauty of the naked body vs. restraining and cramping effect of shoes on primitive tribesmen.[152]

Apart from the fact that this analysis completely begs the question why certain qualities are judged to be aesthetic in the first place, it also seems to be involved in an epistemological tangle. The problem is the following one: how is it possible to decide whether a given 'social-taste evaluation' actually provides an undistorted or distorted picture of objectively existing aesthetic properties without already knowing in advance in a non-ideological consciousness what these objective aesthetic properties are? At every moment such an evaluation is motivated by class, nationality factors, it is an ideological screen filtering man's picture of the world in a defined way. Pospelov maintains that disputes are possible about tastes but not about objectively existing aesthetic properties. But if disputes about taste are fundamentally irresoluble, how can it ever be decided on this basis alone that one taste is more apt to display the aesthetic property or quality than another one? Pospelov's answer to these difficulties is oddly reminiscent of theories ascribing the gift of good aesthetic taste to certain exceptional persons (an explanation which in reality deserts the plane of rational discourse). Those people, says Pospelov, who possess an an extensive socio-cultural point of view, who in their social thinking understand history and its laws, those people have the general possibility of overcoming the limitations of their own aesthetic tastes, i.e. they can overcome

narrow class and ethnic limitations and understand the aesthetic tastes of all people and periods of history.[153] In the long run, of course, these fortunate people are identical with those who have been liberated from the false consciousness of class society. Only their knowledge of reality is really objective (as opposed to the objectivism of narrow class interests), and so by implication only these people really commune with the objective aesthetic properties of reality.

4.342. *The aesthetic ideal.* The theory of the aesthetic ideal grows directly out of the preceding discussion, especially out of the 'soil' on which the Soviet aesthetic doctrine is nurtured, viz. Marxist-Leninist philosophy and social theory. The aesthetic ideal is a sort of meta-criterion according to which Soviet aestheticians evaluate objects as well as the correlative experiences and evaluations relating to these objects.[154]

It is important to understand how in a general way the Soviets employ the concept of 'ideal'. The concept is present throughout all of Soviet philosophy and especially social theory. As usual the former provides a general justification for the use of the concept in the latter. In general an ideal is defined as " ... a model, norm, ideal image determining the manner and character of behavior of a man or a social class".[155] An ideal is to be sharply distinguished from idle fantasy, from what Marx and Engels called 'utopianism' and what sometimes is pejoratively labelled 'romanticism'. The ideal is said to be causally connected to reality after the manner of consciousness and being, where the former is determined by and grows out of the latter. It is simultaneously a concrete-sensible, reflection of the laws governing reality and a projection on the basis of knowledge of these laws of the contours to be assumed by this reality in its development.[156] The concept of ideal in social consciousness mirrors the essential elements of Soviet historiophical doctrine: everything is changing and developing according to laws, the knowledge of which provides criteria for judging past and present states of affairs and for forecasting the immanent movement of history in a determinate direction. Marx and Engels discovered that the movement of history follows laws which eventually require man to be liberated from the shackles of bondage. When this knowledge is appropriated in the present moment it is transformed into an ideal guiding the revolutionary practice of the working class. Revolutionary practice is the movement of reality itself transformed into an ideal; it is the synthesis of end and means, reason, emotion and purposeful activity.

Soviet aestheticians deny that the social ideal and the aesthetic ideal are formally identical, although they do admit that the two are directly

correlated.[157] However, when for example, the societalists maintain that man's aesthetic relation to reality is a holistic, sensualist-imagistic, ideative-emotional affirmation and embodiment of his essential powers in a natural form, they are directly employing the Marxian social ideal of the all-round development of the individual in a society free from exploitation.[158] Similarly, when the naturists follow Černyševskij in affirming that man judges aesthetically according to his knowledge of life as it ought to be, they understand this in terms of the Marxian social anthropology and the resulting eschatology. Moreover, it is maintained by all parties that the closer the aesthetic ideal is to the social ideal the 'truer' it is. Indeed it always true to say that farther the social ideal is from the truth, the farther must the aesthetic ideal be, even if the latter is not formally identical with the former.[159]

4.4 THE AESTHETIC AND THE QUESTION OF ART (THE ARTISTIC)

It has been frequently repeated in the foregoing pages that a central reason for the renewed interest in an adequate definition of the aesthetic was the uncertain theoretical situation of art in Soviet aesthetics. Ostensibly, much though not all of the work devoted to analyzing, e.g. aesthetic qualities, the general features of the aesthetic relation (aesthetic appropriation and/or perception and cognition), was oriented toward preparing the ground for a reasonably certain answer to the question: what is art? This is especially true of theories advocating the aesthetic appropriation of reality, where art is thought to be the 'highest' form of this relation. It is therefore somewhat disconcerting to discover that, contrary to expectations, the theory of art was very summarily developed by the members of the two schools under examination on these pages. Authors of larger works on aesthetics reserved their discussions of art for the very end of their works, almost as more of an afterthought than as the crucible in which their theories either made it or did not. For example, L. N. Stolovič in his first book from 1959, *Estetičeskoe v dejstvitelnosti i v iskusstve*, a book numbering more than two hundred and fifty pages, devoted no more than thirty pages to art. In his 1961 study, *Predmet estetiki*, he nearly dispensed with the question of art entirely. The situation is comparatively better among the naturists and orthodox minded aestheticians.

The reasons for these differences are not difficult to find. The simple fact of the matter is that the societalists found themselves left with little to say about art after having set forth their general theory of the aesthetic relation. Because everything in their theory was subordinated to the concept of the

aesthetic, art was, in fact, just a sub-case, even if a special one, of this general doctrine. The naturists, on the contrary, had been concerned with establishing the 'objective', i.e. extra-socio-human existence of aesthetic properties against the societalist claims that such natural aesthetic properties were chimerical. Where art was concerned, therefore, the naturists were under no obligation to develop a doctrine constructed according to earlier theoretical commitments, there being no manifest logical connection between a theory of natural beauty and a theory of art.

In the middle of the period concerning us, M. S. Kagan turned a critical eye to the discussion about the object of art and found that the discussion was lacking in several respects.[160] In his opinion it was as yet unclear in what way art was distinct from other forms of social consciousness; by the same token it had not been explained how those features which art shared with all forms of social consciousness were specifically concretized in artistic activity. Little headway had been made in distinguishing properly artistic activity from aesthetic activity in general; for example, how art was distinct from the aesthetic factor in every act of uncoerced labor; Kagan furthermore, was not sure that the commonly touted distinctions between science (concepts) and art (images) were of much value. This, in turn, put into question the notion of artistic content and the controversy over the manner in which it differed from the specific object of art. Finally, Kagan lamented the lack of attention paid to the question of artistic talent and criticized the overdeveloped prejudice for the representational arts, especially traditional Soviet 'literaturocentrism'. Kagan's own solutions to these problems were hardly enlightening, but it remains significant that a researcher of his reputation found so much to criticize in the work of his colleagues.

Despite their apparent dissimilarities the two doctrines arrived in the end at similar conclusions. This fact attests to the comparatively narrow latitude allowed theoreticians by the purveyors of the official ideology, i.e. the doctrine of Socialist Realism. In fact, all that was really at stake was the question whether the object of art was reality in the guise of aesthetic properties or whether the aesthetic relation between man and reality was the object of art or whether finally art was an aesthetic cognition of reality. What was basically at question was whether art drew its aesthetic substance from aesthetic properties or from the aesthetic relation, or whether this substance was generated *sui generis*. In the following we shall study the situation of art only insofar as it relates to these aesthetico-philososophical questions.

4.41. The Question of the Specificity of Art

Władysław Tatarkiewicz in his excellent study of the major concepts of aesthetics writes that, although it is evident that art falls under the *genus* of human activity, there has been no accord as to the *differentia specifica* of art, distinguishing it from other human activities.[161] Tatarkiewicz lists at least six major answers to the question:

(1) art creates beauty;
(2) art reproduces reality;
(3) art imputes a form to a material;
(4) art is an expression;
(5) art is the source of aesthetic experience;
(6) art incites strong emotional reactions.[162]

These theories are of course not mutually exclusive and could be held in varying combinations by the same thinker. Frequently the choice was motivated by a philosophical commitment of wider scope. For example, the commitment of the Greeks to the proponderant role of mimetic values in art stemmed from their belief that the mind was passive, absorbing the truth from the exterior. The stress on form, on the construction of beautiful objects came into being with theories putting the accent on the governing role of the human mind in the acquisition of knowledge.

In similar fashion the effort of the Marxist-Leninists to resolve the question of the specificity of art hinged on some general and obvious theoretical commitments:

(1) the Marxist doctrine of social consciousness;
(2) the theory of knowledge;
(3) the more or less clearly defined historicist methodology, i.e. the requirement to investigate every question from the structural and genetico-functional perspective simultaneously.

(*Ad 1*) Traditionally, in Marxist theory art has been regarded as a form of social consciousness largely shaped and determined by the antecedent and actual systems of productive relations as well as by other forms of social consciousness. On the most basic level the problem was to discover what sense and function art had in the context of human social life, what needs it fulfilled and how it contributed to and developed man's relationship to reality and himself (other men). In this sense, therefore, to search for the specific object of art was to search for the *raison d'ètre* of this form of social consciousness. One obvious complication is that even within Marxism this theory of social consciousness is historically conditioned, i.e.

it is only applicable to class-societies and does not, therefore, have universal value.

(*Ad 2*) In the case of the theory of knowledge, aestheticians, as has been seen, came increasingly to ridicule the theory that art simply did in images (representations) what science did in concepts, viz. objectively cognize reality. This theory was simply unable to explain why art was necessary at all, especially if it were agreed that science was of value because it furnished necessary and universal knowledge of laws governing reality. Yet, as has been noted in an earlier section, the Soviets never questioned the underlying cognitive function of art. In the light of their general doctrine of knowledge it seemed apparent that some external specific object would have to determine artistic cognition *qua* artistic. According to their definitions, that object is specific which represents a domain of cognition attainable by only one form of cognition; [163] all of reality is definitely excluded as a possible value of the concept 'domain'. In the context of the reflection theory the issue was whether art drew its aesthetic significance from something external to it and how this relationship was revealed in art itself. Put into such terms the question about the specificity of art could bypass a thorough analysis of the conditions an object should satisfy to be a work of art. The stress lay entirely on the side of 'content' to the detriment of 'form', i.e. the structural and qualitative artistic moments that separate works of art as things of a particular sort from the remaining objects in reality. Nor did it become a question of analyzing the subjective factors at work in the creative process. To repeat, the problem was the following: How could art be an aesthetic cognition if it did not have an 'aesthetic object' to explain its aesthetic sense? None of the proposed answers satisfied Soviet aestheticians during the period under examination here.

(*Ad 3*) The historist methodology, though at this time still inadequately formulated and worked out by Soviet aestheticians, consisted of the combination of the preceding factors, viz. the sociohistorical and the cognitive. It found its expression, for example, in the Leninist theory of knowledge in the requirement that the foundation as well as the criterion of the truth of knowledge be practice. In application to art, therefore, the situation was the following. Like every other form of consciousness art emerged in and through human production, labor, and was therefore something which served to satify certain wholly concrete needs. Whatever it be, therefore, the object of art would have to be seen in light of its genetico-functional significance for human life and society. The question is how the two sides of the methodology could best be consolidated. On one hand, the artistic consciousness arises

in the context of certain specific needs, first developed and exteriorized in labor, which transforms the environment in such a way as to satisfy these needs. On the other hand, the particular qualities of that form of social consciousness are determined, it seems, by the object to which it is directed. In short, where does the priority lie: in the needs determining the general orientation and perception of the subject or in the object to which the perception gradually adjusts itself and which it imitates? As a general rule the historist methodology proposes to transcend the question of priorities, regarding these aspects rather as dialectically interrelated and constituting a whole. Accordingly, social need is to determine the social object and inversely the socially mediated object determines the social need. Marx himself provided an example of the proper approach when he spoke of works of art creating a public just as the public demands works of art.[164] As we have seen, the societalists constructed a theory of aesthetic qualities which seemed to take into account these two sides of the historicist methodology in the analysis of social consciousness. Their analysis of art holds no particular suprises. The naturist theory requires closer scrutiny in this regard.

4.42. The Object of Art

In 1956 A. I. Burov set the pattern for all further definitions of the specific object of art, not only during the period under examination here but in the ensuing more recent discussions. "The specific object of art is human life, more exactly, *social consciousness in a living unity of the social and the personal, in the unity which is proper to man according to his objective human essence*".[165] Burov arrived at his conclusions by combining the Marxian social anthropology with Černyševskij's doctrine of art. In quite general form Burov's reasoning can be set forth in the following way. The first part of the argument consists of an adaption of the Marxian theory of social consciousness and social being to the Marxian anthropology. (1) Since art is a form of social consciousness, and every form of social consciousness reflects social being, art reflects social being. (2) Art reflects social being *in toto*. The same thing can be expressed by employing the famous Marxian Feuerbach thesis. Art reflects the ensemble of human social relations (= social being), i.e. it reflects the human essence in the unity of the individual and the collective, etc. This view is now combined with Černyševskij's remarks about art. (3) Since man's being is relational being, his relation to the external world of nature necessarily comes into a full account of his essence, or in Černyševskij's terms, everything that is of interest to man is the object of art. In short, Burov saw the object of art to be the deployment of the multiple aspects of

the human essence and thereby the objects in and through which man comes to realize himself; man's relational being.[166]

The Černyševskean aspect of Burov's definition is useful to him in another sense. If taken too literally, Burov's argument seems to require that concrete works of art directly depict man in one form or another in order to be judged works of art. To avoid this manifestly absurd claim, Burov gives Černyševskij's argument an interesting twist. Whether or not they depict men as such, artists always and only depict objects which are universally of interest to man.[167] To put it in a language that Burov and other Soviet aestheticians would certainly shy away from (because of its negative historical associations), it could be said that art always and everywhere depicts objects which 'symbolize' man, which point beyond themselves to facets of the human essence in the world. Burov speaks of man, therefore, as the cognitional object of art, to be distinguished from what is represented, depicted, be it a question of representational or non-representational art.

Burov had little success with his theory. It was objected to him that precisely in the question of the object of cognition in distinction to represented, depicted objects, there was no criterion to say which objects were of universal human interest and which were not.[168] Burov was accused of psychologism and subjectivism in the sense of the hieroglyphic theory, although in aesthetics it was the *Einfühlung* theory of Vischer and Lipps that corresponded to Burov's views.[169] Man found pleasure in the qualities he had projected onto things. Moreover, finally, it was objected that there was no particular justification for considering the human essence the ensemble of the social relations in the dialectic of the individual and the collective, as the specific object of art. This object could just as well be, and indeed was, the object of, for example, ethics and psychology, the two sciences most frequently mentioned by critics as counterexamples.

Still, despite their reactions, the aestheticians, as we have mentioned, continued in one form or another the general 'humanistic' orientations of Burov's theories. In schematic fashion the differences and continuations can be described as follows. The societalists preserved Burov's general distinction between the object of cognition and the object of representation, labelling these, however, the general and specific object of cognition respectively. Artists depicted objects possessing aesthetic properties (qualities). Now since the essence of the aesthetic quality, at least in its content, was in truth concerned with what was of importance for man's being man was therefore the general object of art.

The naturists were in a somewhat more difficult position. Simply put, they

did not have the advantage of a doctrine comparable to that of the societalists with which to correct yet preserve the core of Burov's theory. Furthermore, despite their defense of natural or objective beauty, the naturists refused to fall into the trap of deriving the aesthetic substance of art from natural beauty. Such a theory – naturalism or mimetism in the time-honored Platonic form – was completely inimical to Soviet aestheticians, not only because of its clash with Socialist Realism, which requires the artist to go beyond a mere reproduction of the facts of life, but also because it seemed to neglect the anthropological aspect of art: the vital necessity of art for man's life. Strictly speaking, therefore, the only possibility open to them was to jettison the commitment of trying to derive the substance of art from some extra-artistic aesthetic object. This road, however, could appear to veer perilously close to the theory of the earlier gnoseologists for whom art was distinct from science only in its form, the artistic image. The naturists chose to try to compromise: art was a cognition whose aesthetic character stemmed not merely from its use of concrete-sensible images, but from its concern for objects important in man's life. On the naturists' interpretation of Černyševskij, the artist had the duty to evaluate and clarify reality in the light of what aided or what hampered man, without trying to reproduce it, copy its aesthetic properties in a passive way. In other word, the naturist theory of art was more cognitive-functional than cognitive-ontic, as in the case of the societalist theory; rather than require an object to explain the aesthetic substance of art, the naturists put the weight of their theory on the role art played in human life, allowing its object in the wide sense to be reality, especially social reality. Unlike the societalists, therefore, who spoke constantly of the 'specific object' of art, the naturists turned their attention to the 'content' of art.

4.43. The Societalist Theory of the Object of Art

It can be fairly said that, given the parameters the societalists staked out for themselves, their theory of art was an ingenious solution to the problems stemming from their methodology. Art had to be explained both as an activity and as a cognition.[170] As an activity, it had to have it roots in practice and therefore possess a functional significance in human life. As a cognition, art was characterized by a faithful reproduction of reality. The societalists attempted to combine these two framework features in their theory that the aesthetic properties of reality were the proper specific object of art. The essentials of their argument took the following form.

– art is the highest form of the aesthetic appropriation of reality, which is rooted in labor;

– labor is the transformation of the world and man according to knowledge of laws and in tune with social needs;

– aesthetic appropriation of the world is the free, all-sided maximal self-expression of social man in products of labor, in the transformed world *qua* human world;

– art is man's self-cognition in and through the world transformed in labor and in which the stamp of his activity reflects the richness of his human essence.

The artist repeats in *aesthetic* form what every man does in his daily practice. Just as the latter transforms the world in his labor in order to get to know himself better in his relationship to the world, viz. by satisfying his needs the artist transforms certain materials in order to give full expression to man's self-knowledge in its entirety. Where in the first form of activity it is a matter of practical, utilitarian concerns, in the second it is a question of spiritual needs. However, the societalist theory explains the latter in terms of the former. It was only by satisfying his basic needs that man discovered the latent creative possibilities in his activity. Hence the need to be creative arose as an end in itself, an end increasingly removed from and independent of utilitarian needs.

Given this stress on the motives and effects on human life of practical activity, it is not surprising that a conflict existed among the societalists over whether there was really any need to speak of aesthetic properties, aesthetic qualities, embodied in the objects of man's practice. It is to be recalled that for Stolovič, Vanslov, and Borev the essence of the aesthetic lay in the so-called aesthetic properties. On the contrary, Tasalov, Gol'dentrixt, Nedošivin and Pažitnov saw the essence of the aesthetic in the aesthetic relation of man to reality, a relation which was wholly objective because it was rooted in certain characteristic activities. However, for this second group no aesthetic properties resulted from these activities, as defined by the first group. Art reflected the very relation between man and the world, viz. the appropriation of the world and man's enjoyment of the effects of this appropriation.

The issue never came to the forefront among these writers and it received little or no attention in the critical polemics waged against the societalist position as a whole. However, the issue is precisely the result of the tensions arising from within a doctrine anxious to combine a theory of art accentuating, in traditional terms, the creation of beauty in some sense with a theory wanting to reproduce, imitate reality, to draw its aesthetic substance from outside. It is clear that Stolovič *et al.* were much more mimetically inclined, even though they agreed with Tasalov *et al.* as to the 'substance' of the object

of art. Vanslov wrote, for example, that "in reflecting reality art uncovers the aesthetic qualities objectively adhering to phenomena (. . .). It is beautiful because in its content the aesthetic qualities of the phenomena of reality are reflected".[171] Tasalov explicitly objected to this 'gnoseologism', affirming instead that art is aesthetic because it necessarily proceeds from the essence of aesthetic appropriation, i.e. "the fullest discovery and affirmation of the specifically human, i.e. of the societal essence of man".[172]

The dispute cannot be resolved *in vacuo* by arguing about whether art is mimetic or expressive (in the sense that man's human essence is auto-affirmed in art). Neither group of the societalists clarified and resolved the basic question concerning the ontological status of the objects of human activity, be it labor or artistic activity. The societalist theory implicitly contained the makings of such a theory: such an object has a double reference, first to the material world (e.g. to the material of a work of art and to those of its qualities whose successful exploitation is an essential feature of artistic creativity) and, second, to the creator of these objects (he who in his purposeful activity realizes an 'idea' in this material). None of the societalists pursued this type of analysis. This is all the more surprising given their predilection for quoting Marxian texts – not only those of the earlier period affirming the notion of a humanized world, but also those later writings which refer to the strange 'ghostly objectivity' of commodities, economic values, etc. arising in the exchange of matter between man and nature. It was simply sufficient, as far as the Soviet were concerned, to say that such objects, like all material objects, are 'objective', i.e. transcendent to consciousness, in order to satisfy the basic requirement of materialism. Lenin's formula, repeated time and again by all the societalists, according to which that which is imaged must exist independently and outside of the image, was the model for the status of the aesthetic object.[173]

4.44. The Specificity of the Content of Art

According to the *Osnovy*, art is a reflection of life which is distinguished from science because of the way in which it reflects life: art is a creative reproduction of life from the standpoint of the interests of the artist, his world view, ideology etc.[174] In short, the specificity of art derives not from a specific aesthetic object but is located in its content, i.e. in the cognition proper to art. Some writers develop this by distinguishing between the *ob'ekt* and the *predmet* of cognition in general, a distinction not easily rendered into English. A familiar German equivalent might be *Objekt* for *ob'ekt* and *Gegenstand* for *predmet*. Art has the same *ob'ekt* as all other forms of social consciousness,

viz. man's relational being; but it studies an aspect, a side of this general object (the *predmet*). In this case, however, terms like 'side' or 'aspect' are misleading since, what is at stake in art is man's being as a whole with all of its relations to the exterior. The 'specificity' of the object of art is here a function of the specificity of the content of art, of the choice to endow with aesthetic significance such an attitude toward man. Of course, as a natural and social being subject to laws, man has, for example, natural anatomical beauty and he has social beauty at those moments when ennobling moral values shine through his physical countenance. But these facts do not explain art's aesthetic specificity which, to repeat, arises only on the basis of the artist's choice to see the whole of human life in light of a determinate world view.

However, the aestheticians who propagated similar theories generally neglected the question why art was a significant approach to life, whence came its particular attitude and what needs in human life it fulfilled. From the Marxist theory it was clear that art, like all other forms of social consciousness, arose on the basis of labor and superseded immediately utilitarian needs. Although the general genetic aspect was beyond question, the functional side of the question, which would explain why art emerged in human life, was left in a vague state. Art, it seems, satisfied human spiritual needs; however, as easy as it is to accept this qualification, it actually begs the question, throwing the entire issue back to the question how did spiritual needs emerge and differentiate themselves, such that for certain among them art came to serve as the necessary fulfillment. The standard Soviet answer, that art mirrored the totality of man's spiritual life, i.e. his intellectual, affective and volitional capacities taken together, seems to exploit the logic of the theory of social consciousness arbitrarily. It is declared that with the exception of art, each form of social consciousness has a specific object and plays a concrete delimited function in social life. But art unites them all together, seeing them in light of the whole being.

There can hardly be any mystery concerning the Soviet explanation of the artistic content as an evaluation, interpretation of life from the angle of a determinate world view. The doctrine involves, once again, the coalescence of Marx and Černyševskij. The artist evaluates and clarifies life (Černyševskij) in light of socio-aesthetic ideals (Marx's doctrine of class conflict and progress). This definition became standard and was repeated time and again. Burov: ". . . the content of art is human life with its natural . . . milieu, taken in the synthesis of its sides and thought through by the artist in light of definite social ideals";[175] Dmitrieva: the content of the work of art is " . . . life,

thought about, expressed and reflected by the artist from a determinate standpoint;[176] Egorov: the content " . . . is reality reflected by the artist in light of a determinate world view, determinate socio-aesthetic ideals;[177] Kornienko: " . . . the content . . . is a generalized reflection of reality in accordance with the ideals toward which the artist himself is striving";[178] the *Kratkij slovar'*: " . . . the content is reality, ideo-aesthetically thought about (*osoznannye*) . . . and reflected by the artist . . . in the light of a determinate world view and socio-aesthetic ideals".[179] In short, the content of art is equivalent to the way the object is thought about; the content is the object plus the idea.

Proponents of this theory feel that it provided an escape from vulgar gnoseologism, vulgar sociologism and excessive mimetism, without sacrificing realism. In each case the reason was the same: the content of art is distinct from the object by being a truthful evaluation (i.e. a 'reflection' in aesthetic terms) and not just a particular form of reflection or an illustration of ideas.

Vulgar gnoseologism ran the content of art together with the object – reality as a whole. In effect, it eliminated the content, replacing it by the form of reflection, viz. the image *qua* representational rendering of reality. According to the view under discussion, the form was subordinate to the content and served to express it; the form had no autonomy and was not the end of art.

The vulgar sociologists maintained that the content of art was equivalent to the artist's philosophical, political, moral, etc. ideas which were in large measure determined by his social context. Art became little more than an organ of illustration of ideas whose truth value, as far as art was concerned, was of no significance. Burov expressed the commonly voiced reproof of this aberration: " . . . the ideological standpoint of the artist . . . meets and sometimes collides with the object of cognition, with its objective laws, and must come into agreement with them".[180] The ideas according to which the artist reflects, evaluates and interprets reality must be derived from reality, that is, they must have a truth value. Artistic evaluation, therefore, is not strictly speaking a valuational but a cognitive activity; it does not determine the value of something apart from coming to know it.

In spite of this the Soviets railed against mimetism in the simplicistic, copy theory variety. If it is agreed that the two great variants of the mimetic theory are those of Plato and Aristotle,[181] then it can be fairly said that Plato's theory is categorically rejected by the Soviets in favor of Aristotle's theory. In his later period, starting with the tenth Book of the *Republic*, Plato understood art to be a passive and faithful reproduction of reality. In

this sense, Plato's theory was a precursor to the naturalism of the nineteenth century. Aristotle's view, that in imitating reality art can represent it as more beautiful or more ugly than it is, not only as it is but as it could and should be, is much more agreeable. However, Aristotle's beliefs that an artist more or less freely represents reality and that art is neither true nor false are categorically rejected by Soviet aestheticians. In other words, for Soviet aestheticians the specificity of art's content consisted of a faithful reproduction of reality, which reproduction nonetheless shed a certain light on it, going beyond it and seeing it as it ought to be. Art reflects reality by constructing what might be called an ideal model of that reality, a model which is predicated not only on cognition but on evaluation as well.

Engels' remark that realistic art is concerned with typical characters in typical circumstances[182] concretizes the idea. The 'type' is the result of an artistic generalization by the artist who embodies his knowledge of objects into the content of art. The artist captures, for example, the bourgeois type or the proletarian type, i.e. through the skillful depiction of an individual in a sensible image he is able to bring out the universal characteristics that belong to the type in question. According to the theory, this approach avoids the stupid imitation of reality characteristic of naturalism as well as the extremely intellectual, scientific concern with universal laws, etc. The artistic image is precisely the happy marriage in sensible form of the universal and the particular, the rational and the emotional.[183]

The theory of artistic types and attendant issues are some of the most highly developed facets of the Soviet theory of the arts. In the present chapter this discussion interests us only to the extent that it helps to shed light on the question of the aesthetic specificity of artistic contents.

It would certainly appear that the danger of a faithful, albeit passive reproduction of reality is removed in this theory. On the other hand, nothing in it appears to account for the aesthetic quality of the content of art. The question is to know why the ideal brought by the artist to his work has 'objective' aesthetic significance, for otherwise aesthetic relativism looms on the horizon. If the artist is a militant Marxist, the properties of beauty and repulsiveness accrue to the proletarian and bourgeois types respectively, thanks to the social ideal through which the artist evaluates the world around him. By the same token, however, the bourgeois artist will grasp reality in precisely contrary terms, seeing beauty where the Marxist sees ugliness and so forth. This is the consequence of a theory which wants to avoid mimesis and still reflect reality.

The societalists seem at first to be able to avoid such relativism when they

propose the free all-round development of the human essence as the fundamental aesthetic object and criterion. But the societalists seem to fall into trouble with their theory as well. Since art reflects the aesthetic properties of reality, the aesthetic content of art, especially proletarian art, would fall into a curious relativism based on this very mimetism. Because it draws its aesthetic significance from its object, art in one case would be aesthetically beautiful, viz. when it reflected a beautiful object (one expressing the free human essence); in another case, it would be aesthetically ugly, when it reflected objects or forces which oppressed the human spirit and so on. It is certainly a controversial issue whether ugly art retains any aesthetic significance. In any case to maintain that a work of art beautifully reproduced an ugly object, without thereby succumbing to the quality it captures, would require that art have some autonomous aesthetic significance. Stolovič, *et al.* were therefore forced to distinsuish the content and the object of art after all. For lack of a better solution they affirmed that artistic reflection consists of pointing the way to, confirming the aesthetically beautiful, on the analogy of the societalist theory of the aesthetic categories, where none of them are autonomous but interrelated, insofar as each of them is subordinate to and expressive of the central aesthetic category, the beautiful. If the artist's aesthetic ideal is authentic, he knows what the beautiful really is, and whatever be the aesthetic property of the objects he is reflecting, e.g. an ugly object, he is able to understand the manner in which it directly or indirectly confirms the beautiful. The relativity belongs not to art but to the object itself. In this way the artistic content of authentic art is aesthetically valent, beautiful in fact: it reflects social types in a system of social relations, necessarily tending toward the full development of man, the only authentic aesthetic objects.

This theory of art is self-destructive, i.e., it applies to only a limited period in human history, just like much of the preceding theory of the aesthetic as such. It is a theory constructed on the premise that the distance between the real and the ideal, socially speaking, is ever diminishing, where 'real' and 'ideal' are defined, as has been seen, in terms of the Marxist social critique and eschatology. In art, this distinction is captured in the concepts 'content' and 'object' of art, a distinction which holds only so long as it is necessary to evaluate real circumstances which are still in some way not conducive to the full harmonic development of the human essence. In such circumstances artistic activity which guides itself by this ideal, is a partial manifestation, a realization of the ideal. In his very activity, as we have seen, the artist represents the whole man; he unites all the facets of the human personality which otherwise in class society are supposed to be mutually divorced from one

another or distorted by a warped system of social relations. But when the ideal has been realized, when truth, the good and the beautiful have inevitably triumphed, evaluations of reality in light of an ideal will obviously cease to have any purpose. They will cede their place to the universal aesthetic activity of man in all his activities. The object of art will have become one with the content and the latter will cease to exist in its old form. In short, the future of humanity is prefigured in art; every man will be an artist in every aspect of his existence, reality as whole will be aesthetic, i.e. beautiful. It is with these ideas in mind that M. Lifšic ended his pioneering little study from 1933 with the paradoxical observation "*Art is dead, LONG LIVE ART.* This is the slogan of Marx's aesthetics".[184]

CHAPTER V

THE AESTHETIC: THE STRUGGLE OVER THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

5.1. THE TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE YOUNG MARX

A complete understanding of the discussion presented in the last chapter is possible only after an examination of the reception of the thought of the early Marx by the societalists. Although their solutions to the purely aesthetic questions do not thereby receive greater illumination, this does not alter the fact that the reception of the early Marx by certain aestheticians was by itself an event of considerable importance in Soviet philosophy. That this was not universally recognized by Soviet philosophers only adds to the significance of the *Estetičeskoe* discussion. As already mentioned in Chapter Three, once Soviet aestheticians began to assimilate ideas from Marx's 1844 *Manuscripts*, the elements for a possibly heated discussion about the philosophical foundations of aesthetics came into existence. We say 'elements' because the writers in question either did not know how or were too cautious to combine these Marxian ideas in such a way as to compare them openly with the orthodox philosophical framework heretofore guiding aesthetic research. It remains to be shown, of course, that the ideas of the young Marx do indeed stand comparison with the ideas of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. We shall try primarily to bring into relief those interpretations of the young Marx by Soviet aestheticians which can be seen as departing from the usual canonical formulae of Soviet philosophy. By so doing we hope to bring attention to an interesting chapter in the history of Soviet philosophy.

When reference is made in this context to the work of the young Marx it is a question of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. As has been mentioned, these were published together with other early period pieces of Marx and Engels for the first time in Russian in 1956 in the volume entitled *K. Marks i F. Engel's. Iz rannyx proizvedenij*. Previously, little or no reference to these *Manuscripts* existed in the Soviet literature on the formation of the Marxian philosophy. The traditional Stalinist interpretation insisted that the Marxist heritage should be seen as a homogeneous block beginning with Marx, passing through Engels and Lenin directly into Soviet philosophy.[1] The only exception to this block was precisely the early writings of Marx, including the *Manuscripts*. According to Lenin's periodization of Marx's development, the

year 1844 marked a period when "... Marx was still only becoming Marx, i.e. the founder of socialism as a science, the founder of contemporary materialism ...".[2] Basing himself on the *German Ideology* and the *Holy Family*, Lenin wrote that in the years 1842–1845 Marx passed gradually from idealism to materialism and from revolutionary democratism to Communism.[3] Philosophically, during this period he is said still to have been under the influence of Hegel and Feuerbach. The latter's anthropologism is especially evident in the *Manuscripts*, though it is generally felt that Marx poured new wine into old skins, so to speak, that he employed Feuerbach's terminology in a new way, giving it a new 'materialist content'.[4] Generally, however, Soviet philosophers took Lenin's hints as a standard for historical scholarship and considered the *Manuscripts* an immature work. It was commonly held that an entire series of more important problems were still to receive their classic formulations only after 1845. These, of course, have to do with the leading ideas of historical materialism and the critique of political economy.

Although articles on Marx's early period appeared infrequently throughout the early and middle fifties, it is indicative of how unimportant and/or suspect the *Manuscripts* were that as late as 1956 O. M. Bakuradze, in his study *K voprosu o formirovanii filosofskix vzgljadov K. Marksa* [Toward the Question of the Formation of K. Marx's Philosophical Views],[5] does not even bother to mention the *Manuscripts*. However, soon after the publication of this work, interest began increasing. Because this interest in the Soviet Union coincided with the development of Western scholarship on the subject, many of the Soviet accounts were designed more to repulse bourgeois interpretations, French and German especially,[6] than to provide substantive analyses of Marx's often mysterious *dicta*. It was not until the sixties that major studies appeared on the subject. L. Pažitnov contributed the only extant Soviet study on the *Manuscripts* in 1960,[7] while T. I. Ojzermann (1962)[8] and later N. I. Lapin (1968)[9] offered detailed commentaries about Marx's early period as a whole.

It is for all these reasons that the sudden interest in the *Manuscripts* by the so-called societalists in aesthetics is significant. Vanslov, Stolovič, Tasalov, Pažitnov, Gol'dentrixt were directly beholden for many of their leading ideas to the Marx of the *Manuscripts* and even some of the naturists fell into step with the fad and bandied about the terminology of the *Manuscripts*, remaining unconcerned about the possible conceptual difficulties. Those of the societalists who cared to defend their reliance on the young Marx always paid lip service to the alleged immaturity of Marx's views of this period, but they repulsed the contention that a latent, as yet unvanquished idealism lingered on at the foundations of the *Manuscripts*.[10] Vanslov defended the *Manuscripts*

in three arguments. First, he underlined the continuity of the Marxian philosophy; the economic manuscripts of 1857–58 (presumably he had the *Grundrisse* in mind) contain similar ideas, although Vanslov does not say which texts he has in mind; second, he repulses the idea that, because Marx did not see fit to publish the *Manuscripts*, he himself must have considered them weak and inadequate; according to Vanslov, this fact only attests to the secondary place the philosophical problematic of the *Manuscripts* occupied in Marx's horizon. Third, Vanslov sides with those who considered that the idealistic and anthropological terminology still employed by Marx at that time includes a new materialistic content. Stolovič turns to his advantage the aforementioned Leninist view that, by 1845, Marx was well on his way to becoming a full-fledged Communist. Since that is so, reasons Stolovič, there should be no danger in a judicious use of Marx's ideas about human practice, because it is certain that they are truly of a 'Marxist' character.[11] In his initial essay on the aesthetic ideas of the *Manuscripts* Pažitnov did not bother to defend his views in this fashion. However, in his aforementioned book he tempers his enthusiasm about the Marxian theory of practice contained in the *Manuscripts*. Marx, according to Pažitnov, therein fails to do justice to the issue of human tool production.[12] This remark has to be understood in the light of the growing opposition to the 'humanism' of the societalist theory. The concept of tool production is crucial because it entails the wider problem concerning the nature of man's practical transformation of the world, as either a spontaneous creative activity, or as an activity occurring in the function of an objective knowledge of laws, etc., embodied first in tools which mediate between man and the world. It was a further problem to decide whether the notion of practice in the *Manuscripts* should be understood as economic practice, production in a narrow sense, or whether the notion had a larger sense, involving man's entire relationship with nature. As we shall see, the majority of the societalists vacillated between these poles while other writers saw in Marx's remarks no more than a theory of labor in the narrow sense. Permjakov, for instance, warns not only against falling victim to the Hegelian and Feuerbachian terminology of the *Manuscripts*, but insists that Marx is to be understood figuratively in his use of terms like 'humanization' and 'objectification'. These terms, according to Permjakov, can be applied to the products of human labor only and not to man's relationship to all of nature; they can help 'explain' (sic!) the emergence and development of human capacities for confronting an objective world in ever more adequate forms, but they do not explain the objective nature of the properties and qualities of the world, including the aesthetic.[13]

What is significant about this and other similar criticisms is that they have a general philosophical and not just aesthetic scope. Supporters of the young Marx pretended to be able to make of the *Manuscripts* a treatise in aesthetics. These writers would have agreed with their Mexican colleague, A. S. Vasquez:

> In his youthful works, particularly in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx was occupied with clarifying the source and nature of the aesthetic; and in this framework of man's aesthetic relationship to reality, he paid particular attention to art as 'creation that conforms to the laws of beauty'.[14]

But detractors found this not only an exaggerated claim but one which, given the ideas Marx put forward in the *Manuscripts*, harbors certain dangerous tendencies leading to conflict with, if not outright, denial of some fundamental tenets of orthodoxy, viz. the reflection doctrine and its basis in the evolutionary cosmology of dialectical materialism. It did not seem possible to agree that the *Manuscripts* can be restricted to an aesthetic interpretation.

5.2. AESTHETIC PASSAGES IN THE MANUSCRIPTS

There are hardly a sufficient number of passages in the *Manuscripts* to justify easily the view cited above that this work is primarily a treatise in aesthetics. It is true that Western authors, Plamenatz [15] and Tucker [16] for example, regard Marx's general orientation in the *Manuscripts* as aesthetic in character. But unlike the Soviets and Vasquez, Plamenatz and Tucker do not attribute a very definite meaning to the expression 'aesthetic', or at least not a meaning which could be said to derive directly from Marx's text in an unambiguous fashion. A careful reading of the *Manuscripts* reveals no more than four texts in which any mention is made of themes of an aesthetic-artistic tenor.[17] However, these passages receive no support from the context in which they occur and they fall readily under the category of epigrams passed off with a sweep of the hand. But Soviet aestheticians precisely went about trying to extract what they hoped would be a fruitful definition of the aesthetic from the context in which these passages occur.

In order of occurrence the texts are the following:

> (1) "Just as plants, animals, stones, the air, light, etc. constitute a part of human consciousness in the realm of theory, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art – his [man's] spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make it palatable and digestible – so too in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and activity."[18]
>
> (2) "An animal forms things in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the

standard of every species and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty."[19]

(3) ". . . just as music alone awakens in man the sense of music and just as the most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear – is no object for it, because my object can only be confirmation of one of my essential powers and can therefore only be so for me as my essential power is present for itself as a subjective capacity, because the sense of an object for me goes only so far as *my* senses go . . . ."[20]

(4) "The care-burdened man in need has no sense for the finest play; the dealer in minerals sees only the mercantile value but not the beauty and the unique nature of the mineral; he has no mineralogical sense."[21]

The greatest attention devolves to the last three texts. In the second the problem was to explicate the meaning of the phrase "forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty" in connection with the concept of production in accordance with the standard or measure (*Mass*) of every species. Assuming that it is to be taken seriously, this passage can be made to contain all the basic problems that entered into the Soviet discussion on the nature of the aesthetic.

(1) The laws of beauty have to be distinguished from concrete manifestations of that quality in created as well as uncreated objects, all of which must satisfy the conditions that the laws of beauty lay down. The essence of the aesthetic is in question.

(2) In order to create effectively, the artist must possess a thorough knowledge of the laws of beauty.

(3) Genuine aesthetic experience, whether of created or uncreated objects, must be a synthesis of rational understanding and affective reaction to the quality of beauty.

Marx couches his remark in a context in which he contrasts the universal productive capacity of man with the species-determined instinctual activity of animal species. To produce universally, according to Marx, is to know and apply the measure of every kind of thing; and just because man alone can do this he *also* produces, 'creates' according to the laws of beauty. Hence, talk about these laws comes down to two factors:

(1) to discover what Marx means by the 'inherent measure' and

(2) to understand how 'universality' in production is related to the 'laws of beauty'.

Now, nowhere in this passage or in the *Manuscripts* otherwise, does Marx provide any illumination as to the first point. The term recalls Hegel's logic and Marx's critical assimilation of Hegel in the *Manuscripts* seems to provide the evidence to investigate in this direction. As we shall see later, the naturists expressly took up this possibility and elaborated Marx's remark in light of the

'materialist' dialectic. For their part the societalists were more sensitive to the context in which this passage occurs. Here the second point comes into play.

Marx makes the remark here in question while characterizing man as a species-essence, which essence is actualized only if man produces universally, free from physical need and reproduces the whole of nature, which, in Marx's expression, is man's inorganic body.[22] Immediately after this text, Marx adds that the object of labor is the objectification of man's species life, so as a result man contemplates himself in a world he has created.[23] Consequently, a very foreshortened hypothetical contextual interpretation of the passage might be the following. Objectification of the species-essence and the inherent standard of every object are to be understood as correlative if not wholly synonymous expressions. Is Marx therefore suggesting that man imposes the 'standard' on the object, that is, that he virtually creates the object, and that for that reason labor, though requiring an external 'stuff' to activate itself, is but human self-objectification, self-creation? If so, then the laws of beauty are also rooted in this process, viz. human self-appropriation is aesthetic because man contemplates the fruits of his activity, objects which he has prepared for his spiritual nourishment according to his requirements.

On the contrary, however, might it be possible to interpret the inherent standard as something adhering objectively to all species, independently of human actions and knowledge? Now, in this case the sense of the objectification of the species-essence would be opaque, although it is possible to hypothesize that Marx meant that men produce as they really should produce (i.e. freely) only when they are in possession of the appropriate objective knowledge of the inherent standards of things.

Adherence to the laws of beauty would perhaps be equivalent to the careful recreation of objects for their own sake, following the guidelines of the objects rather than the impulses of human need, which sees selectively.

In the third text cited above talk of music and the musical ear is completely incidental, being but an illustration of the larger thesis Marx put forth in the section in which this passage occurs, viz. that the human senses *become* 'human' in the course of history; they are gradually 'humanized' in the course of production. Indeed Marx remarks a little further on that the process of the formation of the senses is the work of all preceding history, understood as man's 'natural' history.[24] Marx would agree that all sentient organisms hear sounds; however, he thinks that only human beings hear music just as only human beings have an eye for beautiful forms, etc. What is significant about tone deafness is that the individual who suffers it is deprived of access to an 'object' which is not and cannot be the correlate of the mere physiological

auditory capacities of man as sentient organism. In preceding passages Marx asserts in addition that the object of the humanized senses is a human object "emanating from man for man".[25] Unless this expression is metaphorical, it seems to suggest that the humanization of the senses is but the obverse of the objectification of the species-essence in labor, as a result of which, as cited above, man contemplates himself in a world he has 'created'. Marx's expression "The sense of an object for me goes only so far as my senses go . . ." can therefore perhaps be understood not so much negatively, as referring to the limitation of a subject's world due to undeveloped, blocked, uneducated 'sensibilities', but rather, given the context, as an affirmation of the 'co-creation' in social labor of a human 'objective world' and a human recipient who is able to affirm that this world, this 'second nature' or 'anthropological world' as Marx variously terms it, is his haven and authentic domain of expression and self-recognition.

Such an interpretation of this text would have at least one clear negative consequence for aesthetic theory. Just as there can be no purely 'natural' aesthetic perception, attaching to the natural state of man *qua* sentient organism, so too there can be no 'natural' aesthetic object, e.g. no 'natural beauty' pre-existing man's aesthetic perception. Both aesthetic perception and its object become the effect, the result of the humanization process carried on in social labor. Although there is of course a natural substrate on one side and the other, there is no identity of this substrate with the 'object' man perceives with his 'human' senses.

In addition, this idea implies that in his aesthetic relation to the 'world' man had first to be active, creative in order to become sensitive to aesthetically valent elements in objects not directly affected by his activity. More exactly, this means that if there is any sense to saying that man perceives the beauty of things untouched by him, of nature in this sense, he must necessarily have developed his aesthetic sensibilities in the production of artefacts which contain the qualities which have become significant *for man* as aesthetic qualities.

In relation to the divergent interpretations of the second text discussed above, the present conclusions do not prejudge the eventual resolution of that issue. It may be that Marx would have preferred to understand the humanization of the senses in conjunction with production according to knowledge of objective patterns and structures, unaffected by human activity. But free creation of objects in and for themselves in order to highlight their qualities would still be understood as beauty *for man*, because in this process he sensitizes, educates his sensibilities to the possibilities contained in things in their

relation to him. On the contrary, if the laws of beauty are not founded in objective states of affairs but are the spiritual expression of man in the world, then the 'humanization' of the senses would have itself to be understood as an aesthetic phenomenon implying the parallel and simultaneous creation of the 'object' as an image of human possibilities. In either case, however, it does not seem that, if the 'humanization of the senses' passages are taken seriously and combined with the 'creation according to laws of beauty' passage, there is any sense in maintaining an extra-human natural beauty.

However, the fourth text cited above seems precisely to contradict this tentative conclusion. The 'mineralogical' sense is the path of access to the beauty of the mineral. Marx repeats a similar idea in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* where he speaks of the aesthetic properties of gold and silver which ". . . make them the natural material of luxury, ornamentation . . .".[26] The naturists found in these texts concrete proof that in aesthetics Marx was a thoroughgoing 'materialist', i.e. he maintained the objective natural existence of aesthetic properties. Some Soviet and non-Soviet commentators try to explain this problem by dismissing it as a trivial inconsistency on Marx's part.[27] Others insist that the context shows the true meaning and that at worst Marx is somewhat negligent in his language. They point out that in the *Contribution* Marx adds that gold and silver are ". . . the positive form of abundance and wealth . . .", a description that suggests to them that the standards of social formations, especially class societies, explain why men have seen the qualities of gold and silver in an aesthetic light.[28] This interpretation seems to be supported by the context in the *Manuscripts*. The 'mineralogical sense' passage is set in a context in which Marx is concerned to point out the negative effects of alienation under the repressive system of private property. Once private property has been surpassed the social subject can appropriate his essence in full, an essence always already 'objectified' and therefore unfolded in and through the products of his labor, which products, however, are lost to him in the form of private property in class societies. Even though it has a primarily mercantile value in class society, the mineral is still the objectification of the human essence, i.e. it is naturally an object worked upon, mediated by the social context in which it circulates as a commodity. As an object to be appreciated by the free, unalienated social being, the mineral is representative of the creative potential of the human essence, which is capable of bringing forth and evaluating forms beautiful for it. As before, however, the issue comes down to deciding whether the beautiful is somehow objectively founded in the natural world, even if it presupposes a subject, or whether it is the untrammelled expression of man in the world.

The foregoing represents no more than a commentary, intended to show the equivocal state of the four quoted passages from Marx's *Manuscripts*; it is also an indication of the difficulties to be faced in the effort to extract a viable theory of the aesthetic from the context in which these sequences occur. The most important problem for Soviet aestheticians was the interpretation of the 'laws of beauty' in relation to the central theme of the *Manuscripts*, viz. the self-creation of man through labor.

A resolution of this theme in the general context of Marxist-Leninist philosophy called for at least a passing examination of the relationship of practice and knowledge. For to speak of 'laws', even or perhaps because they be of 'beauty', in a context concerned with human production and eventually creation in some to be specified sense, requires a clear idea how the diverse sides of human 'practico-spiritual' activity intersect. In the context of the *Manuscripts*, however, it was not clear how this relationship should be understood. Basically the question comes down to this: Is practice subordinate to, a function of knowledge, or quite the contrary, is knowledge a function of practice? The major difficulty encountered here is that, depending on the choice made, the meaning of the terms changes. Where practice is conceived as a function of knowledge, it would be a matter of the application of an independently valid objective knowledge, or, more exactly, of knowledge whose validity is not established by its application; it may also be matter of devising means to verify the truth-value of already acquired knowledge. In the opposite case two interpretations are possible. On the one hand, 'knowledge is a function of practice' might mean that practice (e.g. activities of some specific sort intended to satisfy some need) initially guides and orients man's intellectual pursuits. This interpretation, however, is basically tantamount to the first formulation of the knowledge-practice relationship, since it does not question the possibility of gaining objective (albeit practical) knowledge. Although practice is here a necessary coefficient of knowledge, the content of human knowledge is not reducible to the extension and characteristics of practice.

On the other hand, a more extreme interpretation might have it that practice is an autonomous, constitutive, virtually creative activity. Here it is not immediately apparent how knowledge would have to be conceived. But its logical validity would be nothing more than a coefficient of the creative life of the human species.

Were the matter as straightforward as this, it would be clear that Soviet aestheticians and philosophers could hardly seriously entertain the last possibility, for left in its initial form as above it is outrightly idealistic in character.

But the matter is complicated by the Marxist axiom that practice is always social and historical in nature, involving, in the language of the *Manuscripts*, the 'species-essence' and not mere individuals, who are nothing outside of the species, mere abstractions without identity. By relying on this qualification it became possible to juggle the various concepts at play in such a fashion as to preserve a semblance of the objectivism required by Marxism-Leninism in an otherwise activistic-creationist framework. The charge of idealism would be more difficult to sustain, or at least would have to be nuanced.

The argument presupposes that the category of practice applies first of all to the trans-individual, the social, qualifying the species as a whole in its mode of existence, while the category of knowledge applies to the psychic life of individuals only. In regard to the latter point Marxist-Leninists have traditionally inveighed against the idea of a collective consciousness; their bouts after the twenties with 'vulgar sociologism', according to which an individual is no more than the mouthpiece of this social group which defines him, help to understand why the Soviet aestheticians could tacitly adopt a contrary attitude. But the conception has the disadvantage of equivocating on the idea of knowledge. What is meant here is not so much the content of knowledge which is intersubjective, but an occurrence of the *knowing process* in an individual, the psychophysiological phenomenon, which is understood in relation to the exterior phenomena interacting with it.

On the basis of the foregoing conditions and increments, the following model could suggest itself as an interpretation of Marx's intentions in the *Manuscripts*.

Through collective labor, humanity (the species-essence) historically unfolds its possibilities and objectifies its essence in the world. At the same time this process fixes the 'content' of knowledge for the individual, who from moment to moment is no more than the concrete manifestation of the state of humanity's self-development through social labor. Knowledge for the individual is understood as the 'reflection' of an independent, historical 'socio-human content' embodied in the world by the species as a whole in its collective, transformative endeavor.

In short, this model attempts to preserve both interpretations of the knowledge-practice relation dialectically by playing on the difference of categorial levels to which the phenomena in question are assigned. *Creative social practice* does not inhibit an *objective individual reflection* ('cognition') of the socio-human, historically changing world.

Pushed to the extreme, this general conception would afford a revision of classical Marxist-Leninist philosophy. Materialism, ontologically speaking,

would be understood as a 'humanizing social practice' and not as an evolutionary cosmology positing an ontic subtratum called matter out of which man like every living and non-living form evolves. A question to consider is whether there is a bridge between these two views of man's relation to nature. On the former view the world is a socio-generic ('subjective') world, the result of the historical practice of humanity. To determine whether a bridge is possible between this model and the more standard Marxist-Leninist doctrine, this conception must decide concerning the relationship of social practice to objective knowledge. In any case, for aesthetic matters it could be argued that objective knowledge of the aesthetic is possible without succumbing to a crude naturalism. The aesthetic sense can indeed reflect aesthetic qualities, although these as well as the aesthetic sense arise in and through the mediating process of human activity shaping the human world.

In what follows we shall first examine the evidence in order to see to what extent the societalists approached such a revisionist interpretation of Marx.

5.3. PRACTICE

One would look in vain in the works of the societalists for the following text by Marx from the *Manuscripts*:

> It is only when the objective world everywhere becomes for man in society the world of man's essential powers – human reality and for that reason the reality of his *own* essential powers – that all *objects* become for him the *objectification of himself*, become objects which confirm and realize his individuality, become his objects: that is, *man himself* becomes the object.[29]

Unless a very particular meaning is put on the expressions employed in this text, it is not difficult to understand why it could cause a feeling of uneasiness among Soviet philosophers and aestheticians. Although the text does not deny the independent existence of a material world, it seems to suggest that there is no identity between it and the world of man's objectified essence and that, moreover, the second world is of greater significance and value for man than the first because man sees himself in the former and not in the latter. Nevertheless it became the effort of the societalists to preserve the gist of this and similar passages from the *Manuscripts* and to combine them with orthodox arguments about the nature of knowledge and practice in order to arrive at, what they hoped would be, a viable theory of the aesthetic.

This combination was hardly free of complications and it is not very difficult to bring forth the fundamental conflicts which make the theory

inconclusive if not outrightly inconsistent. As we have mentioned, it was a question of reconciling at least two distinct meanings of practice and knowledge. In the traditional model favored by Soviet philosophy knowledge is conceived of as a steadily increasing supply of true information about the external material world, while practice both orients and applies this knowledge in a way which is directly beneficial for man. The *Manuscripts*, on the other hand, suggest an anthropocentric naturalism according to which questions about the possibility of objective knowledge and the technological-scientific mastery of nature take second place behind the concern for the emergence and development of the human being as a social being in a social environment. A later text from the *Holy Family* brings this idea out even more clearly and contrasts sharply with the program outlined in the first approach.

> If man draws his knowledge, sensation, etc. from the world of the senses and the experience gained in it, the empirical world must be arranged so that man experiences and gets used to what is really human and that he becomes aware of himself as man . . . . If man is shaped by his surroundings, his surroundings must be made human . . . . If man is social by nature, he will develop his true nature only in society, and the power of his nature must be measured not by the power of separate individuals, but by the power of society.[30]

Soviet aestheticians, however, first followed the orthodox model.

(1) Vital needs proved man to be a sensuous being beholden to the realm of material things, a being who is subject to physical necessity, but who thereby affirms himself as a real being.

(2) Man satisfied his needs by 'working up' external nature in such a way as to ensure his continuing satisfaction.

(3) Successful transformation in this sense was dialectically interrelated to growing objective knowledge. The more man knew about the world and himself the better was he able to transform things to suit his needs, which transformation in turn prompted further interests.

(4) The more man came to dominate nature, the more he grew beyond the realm of physical necessity. A successful and more extensive exercise of his knowledge afforded him an increasing measure of freedom, the essential precondition for the development of new, expressly human needs.

In short, the series of concepts up to this point runs: need – satisfaction – knowledge – domination – freedom. Practice, of course, underpins the entire series in so far as it orients cognition and serves as the externalization of the knowledge acquired in the satisfaction of needs and expressed in the domination of natural forces.

This conception suggests that man can liberate himself to such an extent

from the limitations initially imposed on him by his psychophysiological make-up that he can grasp the nature of things in a wholly adequate manner.[31] His knowledge of nature is not indicative of the state of his being in it, but of the objective order of all things in the universe. Those who held this position could also cite Marx from the *Manuscripts* in their support. Whereas animals produce only according to the built-in instinctual capacities of their species, man produces universally, according to his objective knowledge of the nature of every form in the universe.

In the preceding chapter it was shown how the naturists put this argument to good use in formulating their theory of the aesthetic, of natural beauty in particular. According to this theory, man had an objective insight into the laws regulating the ebb and flow of material forms since he stood at the very pinnacle of the process. All of nature was beautiful, including man, who could consider himself the criterion of perfection achieved by matter's other 'lower' forms.

The societalists refused to take this road to the aesthetic. Their initial step consisted in prolonging the earlier argument by one step.

(5) Humanity came to dominate nature by applying its knowledge of laws and thereby transforming it in a way beneficial to mankind. But this meant, as far as they were concerned, that man experienced the world as a manifestation, an externalization of his properly human forces and capabilities. The appropriate reaction to this unfolding of man's essential powers is *enjoyment* of something man has created in concert with nature.[32]

The earlier series: need – satisfaction – knowledge – domination – freedom is now to be complemented by enjoyment. Man admires not that to which he has accommodated himself; he admires himself as producer who exercises his activity spontaneously and wholly for his own benefit.

The question arises here whether the relative autonomy of consciousness and will vis-à-vis production for the sake of need-satisfaction is to be understood in the way that the classical Soviet conception above suggests. Does man's liberation from physical need through labor entail that henceforth he draw closer to the real world unaffected by his needs or does it rather signal the development of properly human non-natural needs, the satisfaction of which unleashes creative energies constitutive of a 'human' object, of a human world? In short, is human practice predetermined in its course and possibilities by nature, or does it possess a properly human, i.e. non-natural quality? This question is directly related to the problem whether the forms of human consciousness and their correlative objects are 'naturally' given or whether they are all the result of historical practice.

5.31. Excursus: Non-Natural Needs and the Social Mediation of Nature

The preceding point lies close to the heart of a controversy about the true nature of the Marxian dialectic. Today it has become an accepted opinion among non-Soviet philosophers that Marx never dreamed of letting his imagination run riot over the uncharted expanses of a dialectically structured nature as the latter was conceived by Engels. For the purposes of the present study it is unnecessary to dwell yet again on all the aspects of this opposition. What needs to be highlighted is the role accorded to man in the two frames of reference.

According to many commentators,[33] there is no hiatus separating Marx's early views concerning man's relationship to nature from his later views. In one very late text, the critical notes to Adolph Wagner's textbook on political economy, Marx sets forth the conception present in the 1844 manuscripts.

> . . . man stands in relation to the things of the external world as a means for the satisfaction of his needs. But on no account do men begin by standing in that theoretical relation to the things of the external world. They begin, like every animal, by eating, drinking, etc., hence not by 'standing' in a relation, but by relating themselves actively, taking hold of certain things in the external world through action and thus satisfying their need(s). (Therefore they begin with production.) [34]

Man relates to the external world as to a medium for satisfying his needs; he does not stand in any epistemic relation to the things of the world before he has fixed and articulated them in function of the practical attitude of a needy man.

Agnes Heller has made it quite clear how important the concept of need is in Marx, this in spite of the fact that he never adequately defined the concept and operated with more than one type of need (e.g. the purely economic variety and the anthropological-philosophical concept of man as the being 'rich in needs').[35] In and through his material activity man's needs not only continually increase but change in quality, passing from the basic physical level to the increasingly complex 'spiritual-cultural level'. According to Marx, the 'first historical fact' is the emergence and development of 'new needs', needs which are not natural, imposed on man by his psychophysiological state, but historical, non-natural, dependent on the process of social mediation between individual activity and external nature.[36] Agnes Heller points out that to the extent that man for Marx is truly a social being the system of natural needs determined by his physical state is not equivalent to man's 'necessary needs'.[37] There are no fixed natural parameters which determine which needs at every given moment in human history can be considered man's

necessary needs. After a certain point in human auto-genesis so-called 'spiritual' needs are humanly more essential than elementary physical needs, the satisfaction of which guarantees no more than the survival of particular individuals not yet distinct from nature, not yet humanized by society.[38] Once spiritual needs have arisen and found satisfaction their effect extends backwards to modify the sense and function of more basic needs in human life and the individual's self-conception.

In an important passage in the *Manuscripts* Marx asserted that neither objectively nor subjectively is nature directly given in a form adequate to the *human* being.[39] Only through socialization does man develop his human potential and the satisfaction of these socio-historical needs requires the constitution, the 'creation' of non-natural objects. Strictly speaking, however, since, according to Heller, Marx does not recognize a real distinction between internal and external nature, a distinction made possible only if there existed independent purely natural needs, 'non-natural' objects constituted by man are not opposed to a humanly alien nature, but belong to the only nature that exists for man as a human, i.e. social being, viz. socially mediated nature.[40]

Diverse non-Soviet writers (Kołakowski,[41] Schmidt,[42] Jordan,[43] Avinieri,[44] Heller *et al.*) have insisted on the capital importance of the social mediation of nature through the practical tasks of satisfying needs. Basically, the argument of these authors reduced to its barest form is the following one. In the first place, labor is an activity which mediates between individual activity and nature, that is to say, through labor an individual satisfies his needs by modifying naturally given substances. But if the need is not a mere natural need, the individual performs a function or functions that falls to him thanks to the division of labor and which supposes a nature that has already been articulated and reshaped in such a way as to satisfy the needs of the whole social community, viz. human needs. In other words, nature has been rolled back on two fronts: as a member of a social organism the individual *qua* social individual is a product of history and not of biological evolution; the object of human activities is likewise a historical product, not identical in qualities or purpose with the natural substance underlying it.

Marx's distinction between 'objectivation' (*Objektivation*) and 'objectification' (*Vergegenständlichung*) is important here.[45] Man's needs steer him in his relation to external nature; to satisfy them is equivalent to embodying them in an object; to objectify himself means to 'create' the object that bears the quality defining the need. In this way an 'objective' world *for man* comes into existence, a world of objects and phenomena classified according to 'practical' needs rather than according to an (impossible) insight into the

intrinsic *ordo rerum* apart from man.[46] In the *Notes on Adolph Wagner* Marx says:

> Therefore: men begin, as a matter of fact, by appropriating certain things of the external world as a means for satisfying their own needs, etc.; later they *also* come to designating them linguistically as what they [the things] are for them [men] in practical experience, namely as a *means for satisfying their needs* . . . .[47]

Were socially mediated human needs somehow historically different than they have been, the world would look different too. Species and particulars, class members and classes, articulated into objects and their relations, things with a definite form, arrangement and structure would all be other than they are if man's needs organized the chaotic mass of the pre-existing world differently.[48]

The last point seems to suggest that the structure humanity imposes on brute nature is purely arbitrary, socially subjective; or to put the same thing negatively, that nature is not governed by laws to which men too are subject. In one of his letters Marx wrote: "It is absolutely impossible to transcend the laws of nature. What can change in historically different circumstances is only the *form* in which these laws express themselves".[49] It is not despite but thanks to the laws of natural materials, as Alfred Schmidt remarks in this regard, that men can realize their designs effectively.[50] Yet the concept of the laws of nature is itself socially mediated; that is to say, it corresponds at any given moment to the degree to which men have come to divide their labor rationally in the process of appropriating nature according to their purpose.[51]

Proponents of this interpretation of Marx react against the scientistic attitude of which they accuse Engels' Soviet disciples, which supposes that successive scientific discoveries furnish an increasingly exact picture of something existing outside of human activity and perception, viz. an ontic substratum called 'matter'.[52] Kołakowski writes about the 'transcendentalism' of such a view, according to which cognition is supposed to be able to liberate itself from human social and historical circumstances and grasp reality exactly as it is in a subjective duplicate.[53] Instead similar discoveries mark stages in the evolution of human ties with the properties of matter.[54] Science or objective knowledge provides us with a picture of the possible fields of human activity in matter. Nature at any given moment is not an ontic substratum but the system of relations existing between men and material forces and substances articulated according to socially mediated human activities.[55]

It would be inexact to say, as Robert Tucker does say, that man 'superimposes' a man-made environment on primeval nature pre-existing his activity.[56]

It is rather a question of a nature that is human not only because humanity is always delimiting and demarcating it for itself, but also because this activity has a direct effect on man himself. That is to say, dynamic activity, articulating objects and their functions in relation to human needs, changes man as well; it changes his 'nature'. "For a given organization of human and non-human forces there is substituted a different organization; one defined objective world gives way to another world".[57] The conception of the social mediation of nature through practical activity as the road to the satisfaction of needs, the basic constants of human life, requires the conclusion that the content of human knowledge is never just being in itself, but human contact with a humanly constructed nature, where both terms in the relation are not constant in 'nature'.

Enough has been said here perhaps to justify the supposition that Marx would not have agreed that thanks to his labor man liberates his consciousness and the content of human knowledge from the situational, practical context in which the human being always finds himself.[58] In comparison, the Engelsian conception, followed by mainstream Soviet philosophy since Lenin, traces, as we have seen, a different view of man in relation to nature.

Man with his reason is in this conception the most developed stage in the history of the evolution of matter. Human history is in the end a continuation of natural history and it proceeds according to the laws governing the latter. Alfred Schmidt suggests that for Engels the appearance of the human being only complicates an otherwise perfectly rational process.[59] "Now the whole of nature", says Engels, "is dissolved into history, and history is distinguished from natural history only because it is the process of development of the self-conscious organism".[60]

Man continued and developed biological evolution through labor.[61] The human being evolved from the beast through labor which became increasingly intelligent as man successfully mastered natural forces and phenomena, bending them to his own purposes. "Beginning together with the development of the hand, together with labor, man's domination over nature widened his horizons with every new step forward. He discovered in the surrounding objects of nature continually new, heretofore unknown properties".[62]

Instead of remaining a creature of blind need and habit, man came with time to liberate his consciousness and will from this need. He could henceforth assimilate nature by in fact consciously accomodating himself to it in its authentic form, by learning its inherent possibilities and fostering change and development in a wholly rational direction according to his knowledge of its laws. Humanity would come to do consciously what nature did blindly,

i.e. progress and develop. A Polish Marxist-Leninist provides an excellent summary of this attitude toward human possibilities.

> Man is a part of the world, a part of nature. It is nature which shaped man among the infinite quantity of its other products. The character of nature bestowed an orientation to human needs and determined the means of their realization; nature's character also designates the direction of man's development. Above all therefore nature designates [the course] of human practice, and practice only secondarily designates nature's road.[63]

Hence in spite of his 'background' as a needy being, man overcomes cumbersome limitations and begins to function as a conscious agent in the natural evolutionary process. The point here, as Kołakowski observes, is that the mere affirmation that men transform nature does not by itself overcome the tacit contemplative character of this conception, the transcendentalism lying at the basis of Engels' and Lenin's doctrines.[64] Moreover, as other commentators argue, the Engelsian conception fails to defeat the mechanistic materialism Marx attacked in *Theses on Feuerbach.*[65] Despite his argument for a dialectic of nature, Engels' materialism is mechanistic in so far as it holds that matter determines the emergence of mind. Human existence is basically passive and mind is a dialectically structured reflection of matter.

Marx's remark in the *Manuscripts*, already alluded to above, concerning the inadequacy of nature's 'natural' form for man, proved to be a potential snare for interested Soviet aestheticians. While supporting the central role of activity for the sake of satisfying needs, certain aestheticians tried to take the sting out of this text by insisting that Marx had no more in mind here than the nature given over to economic productivity and not all of nature as such.[66] Others were critical of the underlying 'weakness' of this text. For example, A. Iezuitov, one of those who proposed a narrowly 'economic' reading of the manuscripts, finally could not contain his exasperation with the mounting difficulties defending this thesis.

> . . . in 1844 Marx did not always clearly differentiate on one hand, a politico-economic conception of nature as the material environment, surrounding man, which as a result of his labor can bear the stamp of human activity and is therefore 'humanized' and, on the other hand, the philosophical conception of nature as *objective reality in general.*[67]

Such criticism, however, fails to hit its intended mark, since it insists on projecting a metaphysical conception of 'objective reality' onto the anthropocentric context of Marx's considerations. It is of course true that Marx liked to repeat that human history is nothing but the history of man's production.[68] Yet, similar assertions seem to require the largest possible sense, where production is tantamount to the activity which is constitutive of the

system of relations between man and matter that is called by Marx 'nature' – 'man's inorganic body'. Such at least seems to be the meaning of the oft-quoted exerpt from the manuscripts. "It will be seen how the history of *industry* and the established objective existence of *industry* are the open book of *man's essential powers*, the exposure to the senses of human psychology."[69] Merely 'economic' activity is in fact for Marx an aberration engendered by the inhuman relations among men in class societies, especially under capitalism. As Marx understands it, such activity is at the origin of commodity production, which commodities stand over him and falsify his authentic potential.

5.32. The Human Senses and Practice

The societalists came closer to the Marxian conception of the social mediation of nature when they raised the question of the development of the human senses in relation to the aesthetic. In the first place, they employed Marx's language in speaking less about the discovery of objective reality as such than about the constitution of a world appropriate for uniquely human perception. Especially noteworthy in this regard was their frequent reference to Marx's doctrine about the *humanization* of the senses. Some even went so far as to affirm that man does not possess 'two sets' of sense organs, viz. one set for experiencing a natural world unaffected by human practice and another set for the 'humanized' world of man's activity.[70] The strangeness of this remark is mitigated by recalling that the human senses, according to Marx, develop in and through the activity in which man creates a world corresponding to his practical needs. In fact, man can perceive only the product of his activity; his perception is colored by the needs guiding his activity and as a result of his activity objects bear the quality that specifies the need.

Thus L. N. Pažitnov is quite in line with the drift of Marx's remarks when he writes that ". . . the development of the human senses realizes itself in unity with the formation of the specific object of those senses, such that in the historical aspect of consideration this unity appears as an identity".[71] Another proponent of Marx's early views, Tasalov, explicitly draws a distinction between the object in itself and the human object. Only the latter can objectively confirm the generic self-consciousness of man.[72] Gol'dentrixt too takes up the same idea. ". . . in labor man changes himself and nature; the external world becomes man's social being and man developed universally and enriches himself as a socio-historical subject". Going further Gol'dentrixt speaks of a 'second nature' in which man develops his subjective faculties.[73]

Engels, it is true, had also spoken of the development of man's sense organs in the labor process.

> Just as the gradual development of speech is inevitably accompanied by a corresponding refinement of the organs of hearing, so the development of the brain as a whole is accompanied by a refinement of all the senses. The eagle sees much further than man, but the human eye sees considerably more in things than does the eye of the eagle . . . . And the sense of touch which the eagle hardly possesses in its crudest initial form, has been developed side by side with the development of the human hand itself through the medium of labor.[74]

The context of this passage from the *Dialectics of Nature* makes it evident, however, that this conception is couched in the framework of the emergent evolutionism Engels aspired to defend. The human senses are physiologically dissimilar to analogous organs in primates and other animals because through his labor man has brought to perfection the biological evolution of the human species thereby outstripping the possibilities of the animal world.[75] Furthermore, although Engels had in mind the presence of rational conceptual thinking in all of man's contacts with nature, he nonetheless psychologized this thinking by attributing to the content of knowledge properties which characterize the process of thinking in its evolution in the organism. The general laws that regulate the motion and development of the material world as a whole regulate the very occurrence of self-conscious, thinking organisms, such that Engels is sure that our concepts can only be subjective images of material objects and processes existing outside of us.[76] However Marx's views about the humanization of the senses are finally to be understood, it is evident that his general theory of the primacy of human practice in the social constitution of ahuman world precludes a naturalization of consciousness, on the one hand, and, on the other, a mechanistic epistemology of reflection. Engels' views entail a mechanistic materialist conception of the human condition, remaining basically constant once the species has achieved the plateau assigned to it by nature. Marx's doctrine is radically anti-materialistic in this sense, refusing to reduce the human condition to a plateau determined by the specific interaction of forces and phenomena in matter. What is human, what man is, is always social and historical, and in this sense determined by man himself in the course of his social mediation of natural processes. Accordingly, what the object is for man is a good sign of what man himself is.

> . . . all human senses and attributes . . . have become subjectively and objectively *human*. The eye has become a human eye, just as its object has become a social, human object – an object emanating from man for man. The senses have therefore become directly in their practice theoreticians. They relate themselves to the thing for the sake of the

thing, but the thing itself is an objective human relation to itself and to man, and vice versa.[77]

Although they affected Marxian terminology, most of the societalists vacillated between the Marxian and the orthodox Engelsian conception. Their conception on this point therefore lacks an inner consistency and is finally inconclusive. On the one hand, they followed Gol'dentrixt's adaptation of Marx's observations to the problem of the aesthetic.

The aesthetic object and aesthetic consciousness are not given in ready form as gifts of nature; they appear historically as products of socio-practical activity in which people transform nature and themselves. Their foundation and essence is social.[78]

This text explicitly affirms for aesthetics what Marx seems to have maintained for every form of human contact with the world. "In practice I can relate myself to the thing humanly only if the thing relates itself to the human being humanly".[79] And yet this same Gol'dentrixt immediately qualifies his remarks by referring to the natural evolution of the human species, the law of which evolution man must assimilate before he can effectively begin to transform the world and experience it aesthetically.[80] Pažitnov, too, hastened to assure his readers that the general content of human labor cannot be substituted for the dialectical-materialist conception of nature.[81] As if oblivious to his earlier pronouncements, Pažitnov now asserts that it is the human senses only which undergo evolution, not nature itself.[82] Pažitnov points out in this connection that in the *Manuscripts* Marx had as yet failed to provide a satisfactory account of the meaning of tools in man's relationship to nature.[83] What Pažitnov means can be easily gleaned from his appraisal of the problem.

In showing that the process of conscious transformation of nature includes in itself the participation of the measure of the object itself, i.e. the lawlike interconnection of all its interior properties and qualities, Marx still did not consider . . . tools of labor as 'substantial' proof that man's labor perfects itself on the basis of the comprehension of the objective connections of external nature and their conscious domination of them.[84]

This criticism recalls the earlier cited reproach by Iezuitov that Marx runs objective reality into the portion of nature 'created' by man in his economic activity. Both criticisms fear in effect that Marx suggests that men bring objects into existence solely as a result of their conscious and purposeful activity, virtually *ex nihilo*. Tool production is supposed to curtail such a possibility for these authors, because in order to make tools, according to the standard Marxist-Leninist argument, man had to study and continually adapt

to the objective circumstances and conditions of his labor as they are without his participation in them.

In this way, we return to the basically Engelsian scientifico-technological conception, that, namely, in his practice man finds ever newer opportunities to gather information about the nature of things. This conception in turn supposes, as has been shown, that despite his situation in the world as a needy being, man is able to step outside of his limits and come to know things as they really are. If practice based on need initially guided his steps in the acquisition of knowledge, now it serves him in function of his 'disinterested' objective knowledge of matter's laws and the possibilities in things independently of his contact with them.

Other texts by different societalists on the nature of practice follow this pattern of oscillation between Marxian terminology and an Engelsian conceptualization. Vanslov, for instance, writes " . . . in transforming nature in accordance with objective laws man makes it an objectively appropriated 'human world' and simultaneously develops his specific human possibilities".[85] Vanslov does not explain how knowledge of objective laws falls outside of this process of the development of 'specific human possibilities' in practice, why it is not subject to the transformatory effects of practice. Stolovič after defining the concepts of 'objectification' and 'humanization ' in wholly Marxian terms, adds immediately that the first duty of labor is to help man perceive what is lawful in things and phenomena, without which knowledge he will not be able to affirm himself effectively in the world.[86] So, too, Nedošivin understood practice as the realization of a subjective aim, the object becoming the 'reflection' of the subject's thoughts, ideas, feelings and wishes.[87] But to the question whence came human aims and ideas Nedošivin replies " . . . practice requires knowledge of the object's truth" in its effective measure, as it is without relation to the subject's practice.[88] In short, the object remains essentially unaffected, unchanged throughout the process of practice and the human subject acquires a knowledge which does not reflect on its condition among the things of its milieu.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion some conclusions can be drawn as to the societalist view of the philosophical foundations of the aesthetic. According to them, the aesthetic sense is a historical, not a natural need; it emerges in man's passage from mere utilitarian activity geared to the satisfaction of biological and elementary social needs to an activity constitutive of properly 'human' capabilities. The need – for instance, the need for beauty in human life – precedes the object; the specific quality of the need is the reason why certain things of man's activity are articulated and elaborated in

a certain way. Up to this point the societalists appeared to be following the path seemingly suggested by Marx in the *Manuscripts*: the social mediation of nature, the practical adumbration of objects according to the specific quality of human needs and aspirations. But, as we have endeavored to show, they followed this road only part of the way. The social mediation of nature did not include for them the objective knowledge of nature's properties. The possibilities for human activity are circumscribed by nature and its laws, laws which govern man as part of the material universe and not as creator of his own destiny and fate. The growing knowledge of nature's laws is simultaneous with and a condition for the attenuation of the hold of basic needs on man and his rapidly growing ability to exploit nature's laws to his own advantage.

Thus, although the aesthetic does not pre-exist man in the world, its appearance does not imply that men surpass the possibilities inscribed within nature, that, in other words, although the aesthetic supposes human purpose and design, the latter are essentially inscribed within the framework of natural causes and forces. The aesthetic appropriation of reality is in effect the 'highest form' of the appropriation of reality through labor, an activity made rational and indeed possible by the knowledge of the laws of its material. As distinct from the naturist conception the aesthetic sense for the societalists is not just a differentiated form of consciousness determined by the contact man through his labor has prepared for himself with 'natural' aesthetic qualities. The aesthetic is rather the testimony paid by the objects of man's activity to his exploitation of their inherent possibilities in a way that is ennobling for man.

In the remaining sections, we shall see how the societalists carried out the remaining parts of their philosophical blueprint. Social activity – the true nature of practice for Marxists – reconstitutes the environment in such a way that the individual is obliged to turn an attentive eye to the residue in objects of the historically continuous activity of the species.

5.4. SOCIAL BEING

Despite their weak case for the 'other' Marxian conception of social practice, the societalists felt no qualms about sticking close to their conception of the trans-individual objectivity of social being, imposed on the natural world in the process of social practice. This conception depended on an interpretation of texts from the 1844 *Manuscripts* together with and in the light of certain later writings. However, the contexts in which these various texts occur are by no means identical in meaning, even though seen in the light of the Marxian

doctrine as a whole they can be fitted together in a harmonious whole. But given the purpose the societalists set themselves in employing these passages, the effect was rather one of running together and hence blurring different meanings of the Marxian concept of social being.

(1) In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* Marx supported in modified form the Feuerbachian concept of a collective social essence of man, i.e. of the species-essence (*Gattungswesen*). In and through labor men became social beings and imposed their social essence on nature, in the process gradually transforming nature so that it became the very expression of human self-humanization.

> It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. By means of it nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life* . . . .[89]

The importance of this text for the societalists lay in the fact that it gave them a key to interpreting the relationship of the individual to the social collective and thus to the socially transformed world. This and similar texts were taken to mean that as far as any individual is concerned he always encounters a world already prepared for him in advance, a world which has been assimilated within the historically relative parameters of the collective social consciousness.

> . . . similarly to the way in which an object takes on a personal meaning, a personal sense in the process of a person's individual practice so an object takes on a social significance in the process of socio-historical practice, independently of whether anyone wants this or not, is aware of it or not, i.e. objectively. Perceiving an object or phenomenon which in the process of socio-historical practice has taken on a social content, a man joins with (*priobščaetsja*) society, he becomes aware of himself . . . as a 'species-essence'.[90]

(2) In the well-known preface to the *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx wrote that " . . . men enter into definite relations that are . . . independent of their will . . . ".[91] This text was repeatedly proferred by the societalists as proof that in relation to the individual the social structure was something existing outside of, independently of the individual. It was backed up by a quotation from Lenin to the effect that social relations are constituted "in spite of the will and consciousness of man as a result of the form of activity of man . . . ".[92] These texts provided the opening for justifying the objective nature of the social world spoken about in the preceding paragraph: anything that exists independently of an individual's consciousness and will is regarded as objective, including the system of

social relations, which latter is equivalent to the state of development of the human species-essence from period to period and is imposed on the natural world in the process of labor.

The general conclusion reached on this exegetical path was therefore the following. There is a world, now understood as a socially mediated, transformed human and not mere natural world, which is ontologically and epistemologically independent of the individual, exists outside of him, but which nevertheless bears a relationship to him insofar as he partakes in the human social essence incorporated through labor in that world.

> . . . from the point of view of dialectical and historical materialism the phenomena of social life, human social relations, which are constituted independently of the consciousness and will of man, are objective, although it would be absurd to maintain that social relations can exist without man.[93]

With this scheme in their pockets the societalists set about employing it to explain the aesthetic. The aesthetic, as we saw, be it a quality or a property of things and phenomena, exists independently of the individual, but not so independently as to rule out the possibility that the presence of the human species in the world has no impact on the aesthetic whatsoever. Three texts from leading purveyors of this idea clarify the basic aspects.

According to V. Vanslov,

> The content of the beautiful can be called subjective only in this sense that it appears as human, social. But it is objective because it arises in practice, independently of the will of people . . . and exists before and beyond the perception of beautiful phenomena.[94]

Stolovič took up the same theme even more explicitly.

> . . . to assert the objectivity of aesthetic properties does not signify the acceptance of their existence prior to the appearance of human society. To show the objectivity of aesthetic properties means to show that aesthetic properties arise and exist not independently of man, of human activity, but independently of the will and consciousness of a man, in particular independently of the aesthetic consciousness of man, which can to one degree or another correctly reflect these properties.[95]

Another nuance is projected by Tasalov.

> In this capacity of objects created by man 'to tell' man about himself, about his inner world, his societal essence, his creative power, and lofty human vocation, is contained the basis for the human picturesqueness (*obraznost'*) of the objective world, appearing as a fully objective quality of the reality practically appropriated by man.[96]

These three texts clearly reveal the societalist logic. Social being is superior to and largely determinant of individual being; human productive relations

are ontologized (exist independently of man's will and consciousness) and are the very object of man's production; an individual can come to know only what social practice has prepared for him in advance in a double sense, viz. the social world as the correlate of human practice, and himself as an exemplar of the species-essence, i.e. as the humanized, subjective equivalent of a humanized objective nature.

It is not difficult to demonstrate, however, that everything in this conception depends on running two quite different meanings of social being together. The sense of 'social being' represented by the second text of Marx cited above belongs to his theory of class society and history as the history of class conflict. The text in question could therefore be readily replaced by other texts, e.g. the following:

> . . . the class . . . achieves an independent existence over against individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class, and become subsumed under it.[97]

In the first place, Marx in this context considers the concept of a social being a 'scientific-empirical' concept. As such it is logically connected to a series of other concepts which together constitute a coherent theory of class society, e.g. division of labor, private property, exploitation, capital, etc. and which serve to explain a series of observable but as yet in his day theoretically mystified phenomena in class society, capitalism in particular. In the second place, moreover, it is a concept which has historical status only, i.e. it is a concept whose sense and function reflect no more that the actual circumstances in which it arose and continues to have validity so long as these circumstances prevail. In this sense, therefore, although social relations, e.g. class relations under capitalism, possess qualifications distinct from any borne by the individuals taken up into these relations, it remains completely incidental at this juncture of Marx's doctrine whether these relations have absolute ontological and not just *de facto* empirical, historical priority vis-à-vis the individual. " . . . *the existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production* . . . ".[98] Marx is interested in discovering the necessary relationships holding among the constitutive components of the social system he has described as capitalism, without at the same time speculating about the universal ontological significance of these components or their interrelations. Indeed, as Marx strongly insists, there is no absolute individual under capitalism or under any other social system; the conception of the individual is a historical product, it is

generated within the system of social relationships and their underlying productive mechanism and can be explicated only with reference to the entire system of socio-economic categories.

> But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class interests.[99]

The emphasis here is on history, not on ontology and an attendant epistemology.

On the other hand, the sense of social being represented in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and certain other Marxian texts is not concerned with the factual, historical situation of man's existence in one class society or another. Even though this conception is preeminently historical in character, it is also a philosophical concept connoting the specific modality of human existence in general, whatever be the actual fate of man from period to period. When Marx wrote in *Theses on Feuerbach* that the human essence is not inherent in each individual but is " . . . the ensemble of the social relations", it could be said that here Marx put forward the ontological thesis that the social relations *are* prior to the individual. But 'prior' does not mean that the social relations possess an essence different from that possessed by the individual, that they and the individual are separate ontological entities, belonging to different types. Marx in fact '*identifies*' the individual with the species-essence, i.e. the individual has an awareness of himself only in the framework provided by the social whole to which he belongs. "It is above all necessary to avoid postulating 'society' once again as an abstraction confronting the individual. The individual *is* the *social being*".[100] To the extent that the human essence undergoes realization and actualization historically, the individual is not a constant, unchanging point of reference judging this process, but an expression, a manifestation of the heretofore activated potential of the human species.

There is no doubt that the two meanings of 'social being' are correlated in Marx's doctrine. For example, the second meaning above can be directly translated into the doctrine of alienation or the fetishism of commodities, phenomena which are profoundly aberrant as far as the human social essence is concerned in the sense of the second concept of social being, and which indeed presuppose such a concept if they are to have a specifiable meaning. However, the relationship between the aberrations and the affected essence is also historical, *not ontological.* Alienation, fetishism and other aberrations described by Marx do not *necessarily* follow from some constant feature of the human essence and thus *a fortiori* neither do the class relations which

have come to exist *de facto* independently of men's wills and consciousness in class societies. Indeed, were it otherwise, were the historically aberrant and ontologically constitutive dimensions of human existence ontologically connected, rooted in some extra-historical ontic condition of man, Marx's eschatology would be impossible. Communism, the social state in which all phenomena harmful for the full deployment of the integrated wealth of human faculties, would be contradictory since it would entail a complete transformation of the human essence, thereby nullifying the sense of preceding history. The 'new man' would, strictly speaking, no longer be man.

Hence it can be said that the societalists doubly falsified Marx's views about the genuine positive relation of the individual and society. Not only did they choose to overlook the fashion in which the two concepts of social being are in fact – negatively – related in Marxian theory, but they also imposed a meaning on the first which they took over from the second concept. Confined within the strictures of their 'gnoseological objectivism' they argued more or less that, since man's essence is a species-essence, and since men enter into social relations independently of their wills, then it is clear (sic!) that the social essence exists independently of man, i.e. individuals. The entire force of this argument hinges on the expressions 'will' and 'independence', the latter being assigned an ontological and epistemological significance consonant with the Leninist criterion of what constitutes an object of knowledge. Armed with this 'proof' the societalists went on to assert their ideas on the nature of social practice as free all-sided objectification of the human essence and transformation of the world. Just as the individual's consciousness is very much the product of social being, so too the environment is a product of social being, an environment which an individual perceives not as a creative extension of himself but as an objective being to be apprehended and appreciated by him.

It is ironic that despite their good intentions this philosophical framework of man's relation to the world actually preserves the negative, debilitating aspects of alienation, one of the central themes of the *Manuscripts* of 1844. For precisely to the extent that the Soviet aestheticians stressed the objectivity, i.e. the independence from the consciousness and will of the social individual of the social world *qua* product of social labor, did they inadvertently retain the typical traits of alienated labor and the subsequent concept of fetishism. Agnes Heller writes about alienation in a way that accords perfectly with the context here in question.

What differentiates man as a social being from the animal world are the possibilities of

the species in itself. In the course of its process of development, humanity can only realize the possibilities that accord with its given nature as a species. In class societies this latter quality develops through oppositions. *It is on the social plane as a whole that men develop their given qualities in accordance with the species* (at least up to a certain point); *but human beings as individuals do not participate in the wealth. Whilst the individual, subordinated to the division of labor, remains poor* (in the broadest sense of the word) *there is a parallel enrichment of the species* (. . .) The overcoming of alienation . . . makes every individual able to participate in social wealth as a whole (both as regards enjoyment and as regards activity) and this assumes a new and higher form. Only then will man become a being that accords with the nature of the species for itself, only then will 'internal' and 'external' nature adequately match the human essence. (Italics mine – E. S.)[101]

Although the societalists willingly accorded that man could enjoy a world he had appropriated they neglected to reconcile this positive phenomenon with the debilitating 'objectivity' of the social world *qua* independently existing product especially in a context in which the isssue was to establish the concept of the aesthetic. The point of their doctrine seems to have been to envisage 'an objectivist' model in which an individual, e.g. an artist, would come across aesthetic qualities in no way depending on his perceptual and/or creative acts. In this model the kind of enjoyment an artist might experience would, psychologically speaking, be entirely analogous to the reaction incited by contact with the hypothetical aesthetic properties postulated by the naturists as the 'cause' of aesthetic experiences. It would matter little that these qualities possessed a 'socio-human' content; they would be – and this is the essential point – as far out of reach as hypothetical natural aesthetic properties, as objective as the latter, and consequently requiring as much attention to their faithful cognition and reproduction as the latter.

But it is precisely because of this situation that the artist would be fundamentally alienated and therefore incapable of authentically practicing his craft. There can be no greater proof of alienation than that consisting of a failure to identify something as a human product. It is only when the artist would cease to identify these properties or qualities as independent of his consciousness and will that he can realize his organic unity with the species, both in its activity and in its enjoyment of its product. Indeed, as some Western commentators point out, the identification by Marx of the artist in class society with the activity of the social body in post-exploitation society is theoretically possible because that activity is conceived by Marx as essentially an artistic activity. "Marx not only conceived man as an artistic being in essence, but envisaged his post-historical relationship with 'anthropological nature' in artistic terms".[102] Art would lose its autonomy, which sprang from

the autonomy of specialization under the division of labor in class society; it would lose its critical function carried out with an eye to the transcendent social meaning of genuine freedom realized in post-alienation society.[103] All activity would therefore be artistic because it would be a free play of the wealth of man's intellectual, emotional and volitional faculties directed to their own increased sensitization and expression of man's self-confirmation.

5.5. REALISM AND THE SOCIO-HUMAN OBJECT

It remains to be seen how the societalists were able to cope with the most important element, traditionally speaking, of the Marxist-Leninist philosophical framework, viz. epistemological realism or in their parlance 'gnoseological objectivism'. Here it was no longer a question of interpreting Marx alone, but Lenin too: not just the *Manuscripts* were at stake but Lenin's copy theory, in relation to the interpretation of the *Manuscripts*.

The requirement of objectivety for the aesthetic as well as of historicity in the matter of the nature of aesthetic consciousness had, it seemed, been met. The basic argument, to repeat, was the following. On the one hand, the aesthetic could not be said to exist outside of a socially transformed world; but the societalists had gone to considerable lengths to prove that the socially transformed world was transcendent and therefore existentially independent of the individual consciousness. Accordingly, the basis had been set down for objectivism in aesthetics without having to compromise with naturalism or idealism. On the other hand, there was apparently no difficulty in reconciling a historically relative aesthetic sense with objectivism so conceived, since it was argued that the aesthetic object was itself historically relative in its constitutive aspects, being at every moment correlative with the unfolding of the human essence in the world through social practice.

There seemed to be no obstacle then in the way of affirming that Lenin's requirements had been satisfied.

> Our sensations, our consciousness, is only *an image* of the external world, and it is obvious that an image cannot exist without the thing imaged and that the latter exists independently of that which images it.[104]

All that is required to make this definition workable in the present context is the background supposition that social making and individual knowing are found on disparate categorial levels and that social making succeeds in implanting the human essence in objects in the way the *Manuscripts* seem to suggest.

As it was commonly interpreted in regard to aesthetics, the reflection theory posited three minimal requirements. First, the aesthetic must exist outside and independently of the aesthetic sense; second, it must be sensible, material and therefore wholly concrete like all other things in the universe, and, third, it must be rooted not just in the visible exterior 'form' of the object or property but also and primarily in the 'content'. In relation to the societalist theory of the aesthetic the most essential question here is whether something like a socio-human content of objects can be perceived according to the requirements of the reflection theory. Strictly speaking, everything would have to be decided at the level of what Lenin called 'living perception', because abstract thought was no more than a generalization of the data provided at the elementary level of contact with the word. Living perception would already have to come into contact with aesthetic properties with a socio-human content.

Now the Leninist conception of 'living perception' is hardly compatible with the Marxian conception of 'humanized' senses advocated by the societalists. Lenin described 'living perception' in terms of impressions produced by the physical, chemical, etc. properties of bodies encountered by the sentient organism in the course of its active contact with the surrounding environment. Thus, for example, Marx's contention that colors are doubtless the most commonly preferred source of aesthetic pleasure would have to be explained in sensationalist terms. According to Lenin, natural science " . . . explains the sensations of various colors by the various lengths of light waves existing outside the human retina, outside man and independently of him. This is materialism: matter acting upon our sense-organs produces sensations".[105] Taken literally, this explanation would have to maintain that like other perceptions aesthetic impressions copy, mirror, etc. the various aesthetic properties of things, be they natural or socio-human in essence. But how, it may be asked, does this conception explain anything at all? How is it possible to distinguish aesthetic from non-aesthetic sensations except by already knowing in some other fashion that the physical basis on which these sensations arise is differentiated into aesthetic and non-aesthetic elements? Not only does this process of cognition of aesthetic properties fail to explain anything about them, it virtually presupposes what it wants to show.

The problem of the conditions for the perception of a socio-human content can be illustrated by reference to V. Vanslov's definition of the aesthetic quality. Although it is supposed to be a substantial quality expressive of a socio-human content arising on a basis of natural properties of a material object, the aesthetic quality is to be sensibly perceived or, as Vanslov says

explicitly, it is to be perceived by the sense organs. Now the Leninist definition of reflection was designed expressly to safeguard the legitimacy of sensations of the physical, natural world which the Machists and their Russian disciples were placing in jeopardy with their doctrine of the 'disappearance of matter'. Quite apart from the classical difficulties encountered by the sensationalist doctrine, its applicability to objects with a socio-human content is highly questionable. However they are defined ontologically, it remains true *a priori* that such objects do not belong to the same stratum of objects to which the sensationalist doctrine is primarily applicable viz. to what the Soviets call the chemical, mechanical and physical forms of matter's motion.

It is a weakness of Soviet ontology that the precise features of 'social objects' in the sense described in the foregoing sections are not elucidated – this in spite of the fact that Marxism-Leninism clearly distinguishes the social stratum of the material universe from the more basic inorganic and organic forms of matter's structure and processes.[106] It is quite clear, however, that of the properties of such an object, only some and certainly not the most essential 'defining' qualities would be accessible to sense perception. Vanslov clearly recognizes this when he favorably cites M. Lifšic to the effect that " . . . the aesthetic object is not a natural property of this object. In its (the object's – E. S.) materiality there is not an atom of what is called beauty".[107] However, Vanslov's problem in trying to reconcile a ramified ontology with a narrow sensationalist epistemology emerges in the following text. "An aesthetic quality is a *reality* in so far as it adheres to concrete phenomena with their sensible natural properties. But it is an *aesthetic* reality because it is not reducible to natural properties".[108] The first part of this description tacitly acknowledges the requirements of the reflection theory: the force of the expression 'reality' is associated with the reference to *sensible* properties rather than just to concrete phenomena, though, of course, the two are connected. In the second part, the specificity of the aesthetic as a socio-human content is implied, precisely in the language of qualitative differences of Soviet ontology, which eschews reductionism.

At best this definition permits the conclusion that the material basis of the aesthetic quality, the underlying natural qualities adhering to the untransformed objects of nature, is sensibly perceivable in the Leninist sense of 'living perception', although it itself escapes such perception – a conclusion which, assuming it is correct, does not go a long way toward clarifying and explaining the problem.

The elements of another view were dimly visible in Stolovič, but especially in the work of those (Tasalov, Pažitnov, Gol'dentrixt) who regarded the

aesthetic as a relation and not just as a property or quality. Their view involved the tacit rejection of the underlying cognitive perspective of the mainstream Soviet aesthetic tradition reaffirmed in a new way by Burov and Vanslov. Instead of maintaining the view which holds that the statements which a subject makes regarding aesthetic states of affairs are true or false, this view adopts an atheoretical perspective according to which the aesthetic experience is the job of the 'whole man', where not just the intellectual but the affective and volitional sides of man's being play an essential role.[109] Indeed, as we have seen, the expression 'aesthetic property' is thought by Stolovič to denote the relation a given material object has to a given system of social relations in which it has come to have a certain sense, play a certain role, and which social relations determine the 'whole man'. The relation of reflection in the subject's aesthetic perception would therefore be his enjoyment of the object as the expression in quite general, unspecific ways of humanity's meaning-bestowing activity, where no particular quality or property of the material thing is highlighted, but where the presence of the object as a whole in the human sphere pays testimony to man's capacities to master, appropriate the world according to his purpose and design.[110]

Even in this extremely vague and general form, it is obvious that such a view could do little to alleviate the difficulties besetting the societalists. For it complicates rather than eases the situation described thus far. In the first place, although this conception retains the categorial difference between social making and individual knowing, it tries to make do without a specific objective correlate, a quality of things, of the individual's aesthetic perception. The aesthetic is merely the special relation of two correlative trans-individual orders: the social as the 'unconscious' subjective in a collective form and the world of social practice as the bearer of the collective endeavor. In the second place, therefore, it is left unexplained how and why the individual comes to comprehend the interrelationship of these two orders aesthetically in which by definition he is inextricably included. It is an unavoidable conclusion, however, that for an individual consciousness reared and shaped in a given society, every object is an aesthetic object in the sense defined. It is clear that this conception attempted to integrate the concept of creativity into the aesthetic without falling victim to the dreaded evils of subjectivism and idealism.

5.6. THE 'LAWS OF BEAUTY'

After the entire preceding discussion it is somewhat redundant to treat the

concept of 'laws of beauty' explicitly, because, as shall be seen, nothing of any significance is added to the societalists' general view of the aesthetic. However, despite this inevitable repetition of main themes, discussion of the point casts into relief several fundamental difficulties with their doctrine. First, the overwhelming concern for the specificity of the aesthetic in terms of its 'content' was the reason for the consistent and costly neglect of 'form', be it that of aesthetic qualities or works of art. This blindness had the consequence of leaving the nature of individual aesthetic activity, creativity in particular, unexplained.

If social doing is responsible for the genesis of aesthetic features of things in the socially mediated environment, and if individuals appropriate the results of this doing in their cognition, it still remains to be shown how the creative individual can produce objects which bear the aesthetically valent qualities he has apprehended in his aesthetic perception. The problem is clarified in its complexity as soon as it is asked why different objects possess different aesthetic qualities. Although the Soviets have traditionally paid lip service to the necessary connection of content and form, aestheticians during the period under question here remained largely oblivious to the descriptive tasks required to establish the objective ties between a certain 'form' and the correlative 'content' of the aesthetic property. As was pointed out in the previous chapter,[111] Stolovič and some of the other societalists maintained a distinction between 'natural form' and 'social content' without, however, supplying any clear-cut criteria as to which natural form was to be associated with which social content in order that a specific aesthetic property, in their sense of that expression, could come about. In comparison, the naturists seemed to stand on much more venerable, time-proven ground, at least as far as the basic opposition of 'the beautiful – the ugly' was concerned. But once they turned their attention to other categories of aesthetics, e.g. the comic and the tragic, it did not appear that they could do more than enter a speculative universe of their own.[112]

According to Marx, creation according to the laws of beauty is subordinate to the concept of production according to the knowledge of the measure of every object. The naturists virtually identified the two concepts; the societalists chose to mediate human knowledge of an object's measure in function of free human activity.

Deriving from the Hegelian logic, the concept of measure in materialist dialectics signals the nodal points beyond which an object cannot pass in the course of the changes it undergoes if it is to retain its identity, its essence. Accordingly, knowledge of the measure supposes knowledge of an object's

essence and eventually of the connections that object has to other objects. It is not difficult to understand how knowledge of the object's essence could be seen as fixing the structure of its constituents, where structure implied the presence of harmony, proportion, symmetry, etc. of the constituents of the whole. For the naturists there was nothing simpler than to make the identification: essence – measure – the beautiful, where the beautiful was inscribed into the structure of an object, the laws of which reflected the place of that object in the dialectically organized system of matter.[113] On the contrary, because the societalists denied that this 'formal' analysis was sufficient to establish the authentic nature of the beautiful, there could be no direct passage for them from the measure of an object to the beautiful. Although they did not deny structural factors, the societalists required, as we have seen, the mediating role of practice in the aesthetic situation, not in the banal sense that creativity is an activity, but in the sense that practice, aesthetic activity, is co-constitutive of the beautiful, of the aesthetic in any of its multiple forms. And it is precisely at this point that, thanks to the pervasive Soviet suspicion of 'subjectivism' in any manner or form, the societalist conception is inconclusive as to the nature of creativity. In the same way that they went half-way in their notion of practice, juggling the concept of social mediation of nature with a theory of reflection aided by the concept of practice, so too here they stopped at the threshold of subjective responsibility for the aesthetic.

The societalists did little more than resurrect an argument put forward by Michail Lifšic as early as 1933, some of them even employing his language without paying due recognition.[114] According to Lifšic:

> An aesthetic relation to reality is one of inner organic unity with the object, equally as remote from abstract, contemplative harmony with it as from arbitrary distortion of its dialectic. In such a form, this unity by no means contradicts the progressive development of social production; quite to the contrary, it is its highest spiritual development.[115]

In order to realize this relation only one condition was required, viz. to be able to accede to a level of social existence where the object or a part of it was not being directly consumed in order to satisfy some basic need. Only on this condition could the material of human activity "speak its own language" thus revealing its inner truth' in concert with human aims and purposes. Consequently, the laws of beauty were to be reduced neither just to one side nor to the other of the aesthetic relation: they consisted in the unity of man free from need, drawing closer to the world as it really is independently of him and realizing his aims in concert with its rational structure.

The foregoing is repeated by Vanslov.

> Man's activity . . . in transforming reality consists in forcing the object to unfold its own nature. For this reason, every manifestation of the object's nature is for man . . . a testimony to his specific human activity, to his self-affirmation and freedom.[116]

Accordingly, Vanslov defines the laws of beauty as follows.

> They are not laws of nature but laws of man's world-transforming, goal-oriented activity (founded on the laws of nature and the needs of man and proceeding according to the objective laws of social development), in the process of which man affirms himself in nature.[117]

Stolovič repeats the same idea. "The laws of nature become laws of beauty when by means of them man asserts himself in reality."[118]

Tasalov, employing the language of content and form puts forth his interpretation as follows. ". . . beauty is the expression of such a correspondence of the form of the object to its inner sense [the content – E.S.] which is consciously and purposefully attained by man in the creative process and serves as an affirmation of his societal essence."[119] That is to say beauty is not just the 'harmonious' relationship of the content and the form of the object, but that *and* the activity of man – the beautiful exists only for man on the condition that he expresses his freedom by taking cognizance of nature's laws.

Pažitnov takes up the same theme.

> Enjoyment of the object as a new form of its appropriation is born . . . as the ability to perceive the *social* quality of objects of nature, having become thanks to labor the substantial expression of the domination of the human social substance over the forces of nature, i.e. it becomes the sense of beautiful, it takes on the quality of beauty.[120]

G. Fridlender explicitly defines the 'measure' as that which corresponds to man's own needs and to the objective nature of the objects themselves.[121] Hence, according to him, the laws of beauty include "freedom from need, cognition of nature's . . . objects, their properties, their internal structure and 'inherent measure' and 'allow social man to employ the properties of the objects themselves, to form them . . .".[122]

A. Iezuitov, finally, writes about the dialectical correspondence (*sovpadenie*) of the objective measure, the interior purpose of the object and man's conscious purpose, aim, as constituting the 'laws of beauty'. They exist in the nexus, the interaction of objective and subjective purpose.[123]

These general definitions do not go beyond one very basic observation: genuine aesthetic activity does not take place despite but thanks to knowledge of the laws of materials. Otherwise, it remains completely undetermined just

why and where the beautiful emerges in such rational, purposive activity free from coercion. The remaining attributes of this process mentioned by the societalists (self-affirmation, transformation, freedom, etc.) are not sufficient conditions to establish the objectivity of the beautiful or the specificity of the aesthetic. Nothing distinguishes creation according to the laws of beauty so described from, for example, scientific creativity for which aesthetic evaluations are irrelevant. Like the aesthetic principle in human activity, scientific creation depends on a relatively disinterested attitude and is steered by the mass of already acquired knowledge. When prodded in this manner Soviet aestheticians, even in the fifties and sixties, fell back on their old standby that the aesthetic has to do with concrete objects (images) and not concepts and that, moreover, aesthetic perception is suffused with emotion, viz. that which arises from the recognition of human qualities in the objects of practice.

Yet these critical remarks might be regarded as unfair because they are concerned primarily with individual creativity whereas the societalists, as their name implies, were preoccupied with 'social' creativity. Since the true nature of the aesthetic is supposed to reside in the interplay of social doing and natural forces the laws of beauty are really a cultural phenomenon in the strict sense, i.e. they do not depend on the individual's activity, but, on the contrary, they are a framework by which to understand and personally transform his milieu. It might therefore be supposed that the societalist conception of the laws of beauty can be translated into an attempt to create a socio-relativistic, historist conception of the beautiful and the conditions under which individuals in given cultural contexts both perceive and realize the beautiful in objects of their own making. What materials are employed and aesthetically evaluated from period to period in aesthetic activity might be seen as depending on the general level of social development and the attendant state of the technology. The principle of human freedom would be as relative, that is to say, effective human activity would be limited, as the societalists suggested, to those materials which are important in social production of that time and place.

However, this conception raises more questions than it answers. It leaves unexplained, for example, the basic value structure by which men pick and chose certain materials to realize self-affirming projects. On the one hand, it supposes that certain qualities in natural materials trigger a wholly specific reaction, leading eventually to a series of acts intended to appropriate that quality and bring it into focus. Such a reaction could, on the other hand, tell the theoretician something about the basic dispositions of the human species, especially if it turned out, as indeed seems to be the case, that throughout his

history man has been aesthetically attracted to similar qualities of materials, e.g. colors, lines, etc.

Most importantly, however, this conception barely takes the trouble to hide the social anthropology that it passes off as the only authentic aesthetic ideal in place of detailed investigations of the aesthetic phenomenon in its richness and diversity. This is the basic reason why the societalist conception was completely ineffective in coping with the problem of the unity of content and form in specific aesthetic qualities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion we shall summarize the main difficulties of the *esteticeskoe* discussion in order to bring into relief the perspectives confronting more contemporary Soviet treatments of this question.

As we saw in the first part of this study, certain Soviet aestheticians became worried about the autonomy of their discipline vis-à-vis philosophy and related aspects of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetics world view. The possibility of a truly Marxist-Leninist aesthetic depended on whether a discipline of this designation could lay claim to a 'specific' object, to an object having a 'Marxist-Leninist' essence. The problem that triggered these worries was that of determining the specificity of art as a form of social consciousness. In order to be Marxist an adequate solution to this problem would have to examine the genesis and social function of art in the social context, i.e. not only the sense, but the causes, the reasons for the appearance of art in society. In addition to this minimal requirement for a truly Marxist perspective, Soviet which relied on Lenin's epistemology for its central characteristic: art must truthfully reflect, reproduce, reality. Hence the question about the specificity of art as a form of social consciousness took on a further element: art must have a specific object in reality to reflect. Seen as a whole, the problem of the specificity of art came down to determining what the essential relation was between the object of art and the genesis and function of the latter in society. A satisfactory resolution of this question would at the same time be the guarantee for a genuine Marxist-Leninist aesthetic.

It was proof of the advance made over earlier periods of Soviet aesthetics that now it was thought that an essential relation existed among these factors. Previously, the purely sociological approach had neglected the specifically aesthetic relevance of the object of art, while the equally extreme gnoseological approach too had reduced art to little more than a form of scientific or philosophical cognition. The ensuing awkward attempts at mechanically unifying these dimensions of the Marxist-Leninist framework eventually generated the far-reaching doubts about the intrinsic validity of the discipline of aesthetics. Hence, while admitting that art did possess a cognitive function, certain Marxist-Leninist aestheticians began to move toward the view that

that function could not be disassociated from the role art played in human life as a crystallization of various social forces which had arisen and changed in a determinate manner and direction.

Given this *prise de conscience* of the specificity of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic problematic, it is somewhat strange at first sight that so much of the *estetičeskoe* discussion revolved around the question of natural beauty and other aesthetic qualities. If taken superficially, it could have seemed that the aestheticians were simply divided over the question whether art reproduced natural aesthetic qualities, a position, however, which had been condemned in the Soviet Union as far back as the late twenties.

In reality, however, the dispute erupted, as was seen, because the societalists proposed an unorthodox coupling of the genetico-functional and cognitive dimensions of the aesthetic-artistic phenomenon as envisaged from the Marxist perspective. Instead of simply speaking about the reflection by art of social being, the societalist proposed that art had a specific object which was to be understood as a function of the social expression of freedom in and through the historical situation of labor. In other words, at any moment in history the object of art was strictly correlative with the state of the social consciousness as this was manifested by the products of the given social system.

Dubbing the object of art so conceived 'aesthetic properties/qualities', the societalists explained them by examining the relation that arose between man, his goals and purposes mediated by his social context, and the objects that bore the imprint of his activity in light of these goals and purposes. Whether or not the essence of the aesthetic was thereby brought into relief, it was clear that, according to the societalists, the aesthetic, with art as its quintessential form, was the necessary outcome of the historical process throughout which mankind gradually discovered its genuine potential as creator of a human world. As such, therefore, the aesthetic-artistic was fully objective, because it depended on the collective essence of social labor and not on the activity of individual men. Whatever their compromises with philosophical orthodoxy in the question of the objectivity of the aesthetic, the societalists' view made it nonsense to speak of the aesthetic in the extra-human natural world.

The societalists were in fact proposing for analysis a category of being sorely neglected by classical Soviet philosophy – that of the socio-human, cultural world. What was at stake from the angle of strict orthodoxy was the Leninist criterion of true knowledge. This criterion (the reflection of reality) turned out to be a questionable guide for aestheticians since it did not unambiguously determine the nature of the objective reality that art reflected.

It was for this reason that the controversy over the existence of natural beauty involved a good deal more than a sterile academic debate. It had to do with the philosophical foundations of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetic. The pivotal issue, in short, was whether material objects underwent some kind of modification in their mode of being as a result of human contact with them.

The opponents of the societalists never questioned the classical Marxist-Leninist view as regards the relation of man to reality. Men can change reality only after correctly reproducing its constituent features in subjective copies and concepts. The societalists, by coming under the influence of the early work of Marx, began to substitute the categories of social mediation of nature and humanization for those of reflection and determination by natural forces. As a result, although their conception of 'reality' was richer, more nuanced, they ran into difficulties with the orthodox epistemological doctrine.

According to the naturists, there exists, on the one hand, a world of things, processes and events, and, on the other, consciousness, which receives faithful copies of these things, processes, etc. The only relation that is standardly admitted to exist between the two is causal and strictly asymmetrical. Things cause subjective duplicates in consciousness; consciousness can cause no real change in the world of things. Practice, despite its central role in man's existence, is no real exception to this rule. Although practice has a purposeful character, it is nevertheless the property of man as a psychophysiological entity, entering into causal contact with material things. The transformations effected by man in things are of a physical kind, there being no possibility in this scheme for objects becoming laden, ontologically speaking, with properties transcending the material, physical plane as a result of human activity. These latter do not exist as properties at all, but as subjective impressions, feelings, etc. Although Marxism–Leninism has recognized the role of society in shaping the patterns of these impressions, etc., it has not provided a detailed description of their extra-individual determination.

Seen in this light, the societalist conception was indeed a novel conception in Soviet philosophy. The societalists seemed to be proposing that material objects could come to have properties which are not identical in nature with the properties standardly possessed by material objects. These new properties were said to have a 'socio-human' content and they could exist alongside physical, etc. properties. But clearly, such properties could not come about in things in the way described above, i.e. solely as the result of the causal interconnection of material things. Accordingly, there must be another different relation that exists between things and man, where the latter is seen as more than just another thing subject to the laws of the physical universe.

In the last chapter of this study we endeavored to show the difficulties the societalists faced in coping with the problem they set before themselves. They failed to exploit the circumstances they created, because they were hampered by the impoverished conceptual framework of philosophical orthodoxy. Given that the aesthetic properties were said to be of human origin and nature, the societalists were in fact reversing the usual Soviet view of the relationship of practice and knowledge. According to the societalists, knowledge – at least as far as aesthetic properties were concerned – was determined in its content by socially mediated activity corresponding to the state of human needs at any given period. Their effort to disguise this reversal by elevating the category of social doing above that of individual knowing led them to uphold an exaggerated objective existence of the socio-human world. In fact, this effort to compromise with philosophical orthodoxy, the theory of knowledge, created more problems than it solved. For it had inevitably to lead to the conclusion that the socio-human world did not coincide with the material world, but that it surpassed and rivaled it. Moreover, the accent on the historical emergence of the socio-human mode of being raised the question, left untreated by the societalists, how the natural world was to be understood in relation to this socio-human world. Objectivism with a historist outlook on the nature of knowledge and activity as well as their objects seemed to imply that, if not in its being, then in its meaning and essence for man, nature was a category of social practice. What nature was for man was strictly correlative with the amplitude of social practice from one period to the next in history. Although the societalists never explicitly drew similar conclusions, we have tried to show that several of them seemed to become aware of the import of their views and for that reason retreated into vacillation instead of committing themselves to such revisionist views.

In the more specific problems of aesthetics, the societalist doctrine was inadequate. It left the situation of the artist and percipient, etc. shrouded in obscurity, because, although it attempted to explain the origin of aesthetic qualities in general, it neglected to study the nature of specific aesthetic qualities as these are concretized in works of art or encountered in aesthetic perception. What the relationship was exactly between a particular object and a quality given to it by the socially mediated human spirit was left to conjecture or dismissed in the vaguest generalities. Consequently, Soviet aesthetic theory failed to provide any formal indications to help artists design aesthetically valent structures in the light of social ideals.

In the end, in the light of the extreme objectivism they advocated, the situation of the creator came down to that proposed earlier by the much

decried mechanistic sociology. An artist could do no more than give expression to or find traces of the collective consciousness and its correlative socio-human world embodied in objects of social concern. Despite the societalists' identification of the aesthetic with the ideal of full freedom, the artist could never go beyond a more or less critical reflection of the socio-human world of his time and he therefore remained determined from moment to moment by the progress of social consciousness toward this ideal.

The achievements of the *estetičeskoe* controversy were not, therefore, very positive. Fortunately, however, the discussion exercised enough influence on the upcoming generation of aestheticians and philosophers, that despite its own failures, the interest in the philosophical foundations of aesthetics did not entirely bog down in the rigid traditional categories of Marxist-Leninist philosophy. The societalists' doctrine was particularly instrumental in the development of Soviet axiology in the sixties.[1]

The axiological conception of the aesthetic pruned away the exaggerated objectivism of the societalist theory without giving up the notion of the practical-spiritual appropriation of the world by man. The social world no longer rivaled, even opposed the natural world, as far as human allegiance is concerned.

Today the notion of the social mediation of nature is not given the quasi-ontological status it received in the initial formulation of the aesthetic appropriation of reality. Individuals are not said to perceive reality *qua* social being, but the world, material reality insofar as it has been subjected to rational human designs and purposes. The evolution of human needs and the constitution of objects that satisfy them are not processes which become detached from their natural foundation; nature continues to determine the possibilities of human action and the latter is effective only if it respects nature's laws. Clearly, this conception is much closer to the classical Soviet view of man's place and role in the cosmos (today the conception goes under the name 'scientific-technological revolution').

What, then, does it mean to speak about the aesthetic appropriation of reality in light of this reaffirmation of the traditional philosophical framework? The answer is simply that in this fundamental tie with reality men constitute and realize *values*. Since the early sixties, awareness has been growing that what was once considered in Soviet philosophy as a trapping of idealism can provide the category necessary to draw together Marxist philosophy as a system and the insights gained about man's active role vis-à-vis nature. Though the issue is not without its controversial aspects, Soviet philosophers like to think of values as neither 'objective' nor 'subjective', but as

'relational' ('dialectical') phenomena. Roughly, a value is said to arise in the socially mediated nexus of an individual's contact with nature. What is now called a value is nothing other than the social sense of activity, but with this difference that it is neither a deposit in things nor, of course, a content of the subject.

The model of value relies *mutatis mutandis* on Marx's conception of unalienated production. The previous conception of aesthetic appropriation as transformation had been too objectivistic, too ontological in character. As such it recalled what Marx had said about commodity production and fetishism: there an individual had no role in realizing the 'social content' embodied in things. Artistic activity was not, strictly speaking, the activity of an individual, but of the alienated system of social relations. The individual could do no more than 'reflect' cultural deposits in things over which he had no control even though he had participated in their creation. But instead of operating just with the categories of social doing and individual knowing, aestheticians and philosophers now began to consider the problem of evaluation and it foundations. Where the category of value was concerned, they found that there was no opposition between man and nature; that the criteria of valuation depended as much on knowledge of the stuff of nature as on the human condition as historically changing in a social context. Furthermore, they found that, seen in the light of values, the products of socially mediated human activity did not stand over and against individuals, but, quite on the contrary, depended on the significance individuals ascribed to their activity.

The introduction of the category of value next to that of social practice was designed to make room for the individual. It is worth stressing this point, for it shows that Soviet theoreticians had come a long way toward overcoming their virtually paralyzing fear of anything 'subjective' as 'non-objective', 'false', 'mystified' – 'idealistic' in their sense of that term. Of course, the individual is still the 'ensemble of the social relations' and the values are the fruit of collective activity which respects the conditions and limits of rational activity imposed by material reality. But values are now said to require individuals to activate, realize them in human life. No longer do Soviet aestheticians insist that, e.g., as yet undiscovered treasures of antiquity must possess objective beauty just because we know today that ancient society expended labor on them and thereby left a trace of its ideal of human freedom. Without appreciation and evaluation, i.e. without individual aesthetic experiences, nothing aesthetic is constituted, even if objects do have some real axiological potential. In the context of the Marxist-Leninist construction of socialism, the great prerogative, the responsibility of the individual in

socialist society is to possess a secure knowledge of the criteria by which to recognize in the history of culture the genuine values indicative of humanity's social essence.

It should not be supposed that the foregoing idealized picture of the axiological concept of the aesthetic was accepted by Soviet aestheticians without commentary and differences of opinion. Indeed, as it happened, many of the older problems cropped up once again, dressed this time in a new garb. Some of the societalists, Stolovič (1966, 1972) for example, insisted that values were properties of objects. Kagan (1963, 1971) insisted on the relationist account of value, situating values in the 'dialectic' of subject and object and making the valuative relation a complex one, involving all sides of the human personality. Here the central issue was the role to be accorded to the individual in establishing values. In Stolovič's conception, the individual had as little importance here as in his earlier theory of aesthetic properties. Kagan, on the contrary, insisted that the individual was directly involved in establishing values, though, of course, this activity was socially mediated. Others (Drobnickij 1967; Srednij 1974) accepted a relationist account of the aesthetic but shied away from the concept of value, thinking it inappropriate in a scientific aesthetics.

The usual poles of the Marxist framework were not absent from these disputes either, viz., the cognitive and the genetico-functional dimensions of the Marxist perspective. To accentuate the cognitive dimension implied having to investigate above all the reasons why certain features of objects had come to have particular value for men. A genetico-functional explication of value would identify axiological inquiries as a method of interpretation of 'cultural objects', i.e., objects seen in light of the role they played in human life. As before, an important question has been to find a way of combining these perspectives. The interest in Marx's method, i.e. the so-called 'logic' of *Capital*, as well as the introductory remarks in *Grundrisse* on the importance of the whole, have led to attempts to unite axiological with ontological and epistemological considerations. But, with few exceptions, most Soviet philosophers are still working out the details of a program of investigation and the methods to be pursued.

It is debatable whether Soviet aestheticians have resolved anything by putting their collective finger on value as the locus of the aesthetic. For instance, it is difficult to escape the impression that it is completely arbitrary to identify the social ideal of a human world as an aesthetic rather than, say, an ethical value. However, in concrete terms the relationist conception of value has in principle opened the door to extensive empirical and historical

investigations which could prove to be fruitful and tie in with the results of research carried on outside the 'socialist camp'. For, since an aesthetic value is a relational phenomenon, involving the interaction of a subject and an object in a socio-cultural context, it is essential for an aesthetics conceived in this fashion to study all the conditions to be satisfied by both *relata* in their interaction. For once in Soviet philosophy a philosophical-speculative axiom does not stand in the way of genuine research carried out with reliable methods, but, on the contrary, appeals to the findings of such research on a very wide front. Indeed, it is ironic that in comparison with the developments in methodology, philosophical axiology has received little development. It may be that ideologists, philosophers and aestheticians alike have purposefully left axiology in this relatively undeveloped state. For it is arguable that the so-called relational theory of value says much less than at first sight it appears to say. Under the banner of values which take form in the interaction of the socially mediated subject and the socially meaningful world, any philosophical, historical, sociological, etc. content can be passed off without affecting the fundamental notion of relationality. Thus the ideologists can breath easily, assured that their treasure is not a museum curiosity, because it continues to furnish the trappings to a research identified as Marxist-Leninist by its geopolitical situation. And in such circumstances the serious researcher is less likely to run into ideological obstacles and closed doors so long as he allows for the translation of his findings, or at least their conclusions, into the rhetoric of the Party ideologue and of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy as a whole.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER 1

[1] Volkova and Novikova 1975, pp. 3–4. Aesthetics is a science: (1) about the essence of art and creativity, (2) about taste and the laws of beauty, (3) about the aesthetic appropriation of the world and about art as a specific form of social consciousness, (4) about aesthetic properties and their reflection in art, (5) about the laws of the formation of aesthetic culture, (6) about man's aesthetic relation to reality. Unfortunately, the authors fail to identify the proponents of these positions.

[2] Further details about the contributions of the 'classics' to Soviet aesthetics are given below in Chapter 2, especially Sections 1 and 2.

[3] RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), VOAPP (All-Union Union of Associations of Proletarian Writers), Proletkult and other literary-artistic organizations of the period are discussed in detail in Ermolaev 1963.

[4] The expression 'class equivalent' was first used by Plekhanov and became the slogan of those who were for a 'Plekhanovite orthodoxy'. For further details see below, Chapter 2, Section 4, and Ermolaev 1963.

[5] N. Iezuitov: 'Konec krasote', in *Proletarskaja literatura* 1931, 4, p. 148; cited by Stolovič 1972, p. 12.

[6] L. Ja.Zivel'činskaja: *Opyt marksistskogo analiza istorii estetiki*, M., 1928, p. 312; cited by Baskin 1964, p. 144.

[7] Cf. 'O novom proekte programmy po estetike', 1948, p. 337.

[8] On the renewal of Soviet philosophy in 1947 cf. Wetter 1958, Chapter 9; further details can be found in Fizer 1962.

[9] Cf. 'Proekt programmy kursa *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki*' 1948.

[10] *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* 1960.

[11] Morawski 1964, p. 10. Aesthetics is (1) a general theory of art, (2) about aesthetic properties, (3) a science about taste and about the beautiful.

[12] E.g. two widely separated authors, Suvorov 1958, p. 47, and Zis' 1975, p. 4, write that aesthetics has been considered (1) a theory of art, (2) a theory of beauty, (3) a mechanical union of (1) and (2).

[13] Stolovič 1961, pp. 6–9: (1) a theory of art, (2) a theory of beauty, (3) a theory of beauty and art, (4) a theory of aesthetic consciousness, (5) a theory of aesthetic properties.

[14] Eremeev 1969, pp. 5–7: (1) a science of sensible cognition, (2) of beauty, (3) of evaluation, (4) a mechanical unification of the psychological (creativity) with the ontological (natural beauty, etc.), (5) aesthetic appropriation of the world.

[15] Cf. note 1 above.

[16] Cf. 'Diskussija o predmete marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki', 1956, pp. 173–187 where Puzis' views are contained among those of many other aestheticians.

[17] Pospelov 1965, pp. 356–358.

[18] Eremeev 1969, p. 5.
[19] Burov 1956, p. 15.
[20] Kagan 1971, p. 24.
[21] Zis' 1975, p. 12.
[22] 'Proekt programmy kursa *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki*', p. 338.
[23] K. Krivickij: *Čto takoe estetika*?, M., 1960, cited by Morawski 1964, no page number given.
[24] Cf., e.g., 'O zadačax marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki' 1955.
[25] Astaxov's, Razumnyj's, Vercman's and Apresjan's views are put forward in 'Diskussija o predmete marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki' 1956.
[26] *Kratkij slovar' po estetike* 1963, cf. the entry 'Estetika' p. 443ff.
[27] Burov 1956.
[28] "Art is expected to reflect reality not aesthetically, but *truthfully*, from the standpoint of a determinate aesthetic ideal." 'O zadačax marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki' 1955, p. 70.
[29] Trofimov 1956, p. 24.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[31] Trofimov 1964, pp. 168–169.
[32] Stolovič 1961, p. 6.
[33] This text is from an English translation of a section of the *Osnovy*; Nedošivin 1972, p. 131.
[34] Borev 1965, p. 11.
[35] *Loc. cit.*
[36] The Russian is difficult to translate. We have chosen 'naturists' for *prirodniki* because 'naturalists' would be misleading. In the same way *obščestvenniki* is translated as 'societalists' rather than as 'socialists'.
[37] Chapter 5 is devoted to the assimilation of the work of the early Marx by some Soviet aestheticians.
[38] Subjectivism and objectivism have been regarded as the classical opposition on the question of the nature and existence of aesthetic values.
[39] This was more or less the position advocated by the societalist school.
[40] For a further discussion of the questions constituting the stock of problems dealt with by the aestheticians see below, Chapter 3, Section 3.21.
[41] E. g. Borev 1961 and Kagan 1971.
[42] Stolovič 1972.
[43] It seems that the honor of introducing the concept of aesthetic value goes to Kagan 1963,
[44] Cf., e.g., 'Estetičeskaja dejatel'nost' i estetičeskoe soznanie', in *Marksistskaja-leninsksja estetika* 1973. Another example is a translation of Novikova's work: 'Aktywność estetyczna w systemie praktiki społecznej', in *Sztuka i społeczenstwo* 1976.
[45] The best statement of Morawski's view on this matter is his 'The Criteria of Aesthetic Evaluation', in Morawski 1974, pp. 1–87. Further details as well as passing criticisms of the Soviet position are found in Morawski 1973.
[46] Borev 1975, p. 25.
[47] After surveying the claims made in this area, Eremeev arrives at the following conclusions: "Aesthetics is a science thanks to its typological character, the capacity to concentrate attention on the essence, on the definition, hence it investigates 'general laws'

and not the entire aesthetic appropriation with its limitless shadings and nuances". Eremeev 1969, p. 12.

[48] Cf., e.g., Borev 1975, Sections 2.2ff. and Kagan 1971, p. 58ff. The subject will be more amply treated in later sections of this chapter.

[49] Trofimov 1964, p. 189.

[50] Stolovič 1961, Chapter 3; Stolovič 1969, p. 3.

[51] Kagan 1971, p. 45.

[52] E.g. Volkova and Novikova 1975 and Novikova in *Marksistskaja-leninskaja estetika* 1973, *op. cit.*

[53] An example of the nature and quality of the research being carried on is the collective volume edited by B. S. Mejlax, the leading spokesman for the systems approach. *Xudožestvennoe vosprijatie* 1971.

[54] Barabaš 1974.

[55] Stolovič 1969, p. 4.

[56] Cf., e.g., Tasalov 1971, pp. 189–190. According to Stolovič, one takes the general philosophical position about class, peopleness and partymindedness ... and one illustrates them with examples from art ...", Stolovič 1961, p. 31.

[57] Astaxov 1962, p. 3; Eremeev 1969, p. 14.

[58] This is one of the central theses of the doctrine of Socialist Realism; for a fuller discussion see James 1973.

[59] See below, Section 1.323 of this Chapter.

[60] For a criticism of this bias by a Marxist aesthetician see the review of Kagan's *Lekcii* by Dziemidok 1968.

[61] For an example of the kind of analysis carried out in this regard see Ju. B. Borev, 1960; also below Chapter 4, Section 4.2.

[62] Kagan 1972.

[63] On the history of this problematic in Soviet aesthetics see below Chapter 3, Section 3.21.

[64] Stolovič 1967.

[65] Stolovič 1968. He has also published a book on these subjects; Stolovič 1969.

[66] *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj filosofii* 1971, pp. 398–99.

[67] Mejlax 1948.

[68] Astaxov 1962, p. 13.

[69] Egorov 1963, p. 17.

[70] Zis' 1975, p. 10.

[71] Volkova and Novikova 1975, p. 14f.

[72] The following holds *mutatis mutandis* for aesthetics too: "Marxist philosophy synthesizes the achievements of the particular sciences. It depends on them in the sense that without them, without the material which they [provide], it could not exist at all. On the other hand, however, it reacts on these sciences. It constitutes the methodological and world-view basis for these sciences. None of the natural sciences nor any of the social sciences are fully autonomous in the methodological, conceptual and ideological senses, i.e. they are not free from ideological as sumptions. General ideological assumptions as well as methodological principles condition the content and value of scientific results to a large extent." *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj filosofii* 1971, p. 23.

[73] Eremeev 1969, p. 11.

[74] Kagan 1971, p. 20ff.

[75] Astaxov 1962, p. 13.
[76] Trofimov 1964, p. 191.
[77] See the entry 'Metodologija' in *FE* 3. A succinct statement of the relation of aesthetics to philosophy is found in Kmita 1976.
[78] *FE* 3, p. 410.
[79] "Aesthetics possesses a relative independence, because its methods are not simply deduced from philosophy but are also determined by the material of the specific object of aesthetics and depend on the methods of other sciences." Stolovič 1961, p. 87.

"The connection between the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism and aesthetics must be organic, founded on a thorough investigation of the specificity of the investigated material." Trofimov 1964, p. 191.
[80] Kagan 1971, p. 51ff.
[81] According to *Marksistskaja-leninskaja estetika* 1973, pp. 6–7, the problems are, among others, the interrelation of subject and object, material and ideal in aesthetic activity, and aesthetic perception: questions about the class, popular and partisan character of art, the interrelationship of art with other forms of social consciousness, about the historical laws of development of art, about the adequateness of their reflection of reality, artistic method, etc.
[82] Cf. Morawski 1975, p. 61ff.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[85] The most complete view of the history of aesthetics, especially that of the twenties, is the collection of studies edited together under the title *Iz istorii sovetskoj estetičeskoj mysli* 1967. Another detailed look at the aesthetics of the twenties is Novožilova, 1968. Details are also given in Kagan 1971, p. 46ff.; Davydov 1968. An interesting article is Bičuk 1969.
[86] For the acceptance by Soviet philosophy see Blakeley 1976.
[87] Maca 1967, p. 18. Palmier 1975 is a book devoted to the question of the links between art and the revolution.
[88] How the ideas of the Proletkult evolved out of A. A. Bogdanov's philosophy is treated in Novožilova 1968, p. 56ff. See also Rogovin 1967.
[89] For details on Plekhanov see below, Chapter 2, Section 2.3. Mention should be made of the aesthetics of German Social Democracy (Mehring, Kautsky, *et. al.*) which tended in this direction. Some details are given in Solomon (ed.), 1973.
[90] On Lenin see below, Chapter 2, Section 2.2.
[91] Mašinskij 1967, p. 159.
[92] The most frequently mentioned 'Vulgar sociologists' are Pereverzev, Friče, Šmit, Sakulin, Ioffe. Others mentioned are members of Pereverzev's school: Pospelov, Bespalov, Focht, or members of Friče's school, Arvatov, Fedorov-Davydov, Lunačarskij.
[93] Bičuk 1969, p. 57.
[94] Mašinksij 1967, pp. 161–163.
[95] *Loc. cit.*
[96] On Friče's views see Novožilova 1968, pp. 98–110; Mašinskij 1967, p. 170f.
[97] Novožilova 1968, p. 109.
[98] Bičuk 1969, p. 58.
[99] Novožilova 1968, p. 52f.
[100] Davydov 1968, pp. 10–11.

[101] Novožilova 1968, p. 52.

[102] E.g. Pereverzev's *'literaturovedečeskij reljativizm'*, according to which an artist is not able to cognize objectively a reality finding itself outside of the limits of his social class, Mašinskij 1967, p. 163.

[103] Engels to W. Borgius in Marx, Engels, *On Literature and Art* 1976, p. 87ff.

[104] Bičuk 1969, p. 61.

[105] For details on the history of the struggle see Ermolaev 1963.

[106] The reference is to Engels' letters to Minna Kautsky and Margaret Harkness devoted to the ideological content and realism of literary works. Cf. *On Literature and Art* 1978, p. 87ff.

[107] The reference is to Lenin's series of five short articles on Tolstoy.

[108] Kagan 1971, p. 49.

[109] These expressions are employed in Kagan 1967.

[110] These expressions are taken from Davydov 1968, pp. 16–17.

[111] *Loc. cit.*

[112] 'Classical' sources of 'vulgar gnoseologism', frequently subjected to criticism, are Kalošin 1953 and Nedošivin 1953. The account here is based on these sources as well as on information in critical commentaries (e.g. Burov 1956, p. 56f.).

[113] According to Planty-Bonjour 1974, p. 56f., Belinskij literally cites Hegel.

[114] From Engels's letter to Margaret Harkness, *On Literature and Art* 1976, p. 90.

[115] This is a paraphrase of Lenin's remark: "The path from living observation to abstract thought and from the latter to practice, that is the dialectical path of the recognition of truth." Lenin 1947, pp. 146–147.

[116] Pospelov 1964, p. 179.

[117] In 1958 Nedošivin, p. 18, wrote the following: "We are now striving not to limit ourselves to a simple deciphering of universal philosophical positions in art material, but we are feeling the necessity of going in depth into art, both as to its object as well as to its social-aesthetic function."

[118] An example of such criticism is Tasalov 1971. An earlier example is Borev 1961.

[119] Borev in the article cited above takes issue with the struggle between the 'empiricist', B. Razumnyj, and the theoretician or 'scholastic', A. Lebedev.

[120] Razumnyj, V.A.: *Etičeskoe i estetičeskoe v iskusstve*, M., Iskusstvo, pp. 60–62, cited in Borev 1961, p. 91.

[121] Razumnyj, V.A.: 'Problemy podlinnye, problemy mnimye', *VL* 1960,12, p. 96, cited in Borev 1961, p. 92.

[122] Stolovič 1961, Chapter 3, especially pp. 96–97.

[123] Borev recognizes the validity of this method in his works from 1960, 1961, 1965, 1975.

[124] Though scornful of Popper's criticism of Marxist 'historicism' – the doctrine according to which there exist historical laws the knowledge of which enables predictions of social behavior – Borev prefers to employ the expression 'historism'. As will become apparent, however, his meaning of the term coincides partly with the object of Popper's attack and partly with socio-cultural relativism (of values and knowledge) prevalent in certain philosophies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marxists today are hardly of one mind in the question of terminology; Morawski 1973, 1974 refers to the authentic Marxist position as 'historicism'. Later in this study, in Chapter V, I employ the term 'historism'. For an up-to-date report on the Western views concerning this

terminological confusion see Messmer 1978, pp. 163–165.

[125] Borev 1961, p. 93.

[126] Morawski 1963 promotes two works he considers good examples of successful applications of the historist method: N.A. Dmitrieva: 'Istoričeskie zakonomernosti razvitija iskusstva', in *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* 1960 and L. Pažitnov and B. Šragin: 'O nekotorych zakonomernostjach razvitija estetičeskogo soznanija', *VE* 1960, pp. 132–207.

[127] For a very complete account of Soviet attitudes on cybernetics, systems theory and related disciplines see Hess 1977, especially pp. 262–287.

[128] Kagan 1972.

[129] Farbštejn 1972.

[130] Birjukov and Geller 1973, p. 269. This is an invaluable reference source, providing bibliographies as well as succinct descriptions of the problematics.

[131] For a periodization until 1968 of the acceptance of 'structural' methods into literary theory, see Ingold 1969. Information about the development of cybernetics in the U.S.S.R. can be found in Kirschenmann 1970 and Graham 1974.

[132] Runin 1971, p. 115.

[133] Birjukov and Geller 1973, pp. 269, 273, 275.

[134] Some examples are: Kogan and Lukjanin 1964, Fedotova 1967, Mejlax 1967, Runin 1971, Birjukov and Geller 1973 (also 1971), Kagan 1972, Pereverzev 1971 and S. Rappoport 1971.

[135] Birjukov and Geller 1971, p. 10.

[136] *Loc. cit.*

[137] "The poet employs multiple means for expressing the meaning which his native language gives him; he chooses such a variant of the exposition (*izloženija*) which satisfies both the requirements of poetry ... and at the same time faithfully translates the sense. The information is not lost, ... the information becomes artistic. This allows poetic language to carry supplementary information." Kondratov, A.: *Matematika i poezija*, M. Znanie 1961, cited in Runin 1971, p. 119.

[138] Runin 1971, p. 119.

[139] Birjukov and Geller 1971, p. 10.

[140] "Information as something objective is an aesthetic reality only by being subjectively interpreted by man. But this no longer is information but artistic content." Runin 1971, p. 129.

[141] As of 1973 the most important work done, according to Birjukov and Geller, is: *Kibernetiku – na službu kommunizmu* 1967, Lotman 1970, 1971, Lotman and Uspenskij 1971, Uspenskij 1970, 1971, Ivanov 1965, 1971, Rižinašvili 1971, Pek 1971.

[142] Cf. Rappoport 1971 for a concise summary of the issue.

[143] The reference here is to the first four volumes of *Trudy po znakovym sistemam*, T.1 vyp. 181, 191, 236, 284, T.2 1965, T.3 1967, T.4 1969, Tartu.

[144] *VL*: L. Timofeev: 'Sorok let spustija', 1963,4, plus discussion in 1965,1, 1967,10, 1969,2; also M. Giršman, *VF* 1968,10. References from Ingold 1969.

[145] Lotman 1970.

[146] References by philosophical aestheticians to semiology began already in the mid-sixties, Cf., e.g., Borev 1965. Major statements came with Kagan 1971. See also Rižinašvili 1971, 1972. More recently, Xrapčenko 1976 and Martynenko 1971.

[147] Rižinašvili 1972, p. 47.

[148] Martynenko 1971, p. 171.
[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 173–174.
[150] Kagan 1972, p. 98.
[151] Martynenko 1971, p. 171.
[152] Borev 1975, cf. Section 2.1: 'Metod. Problemy istorizma i strukturalizma'.
[153] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[154] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[155] *Ibid.*, pp. 19–21.
[156] According to Farbštejn 1972, the method was officially sanctioned in 1961 with the creation of a special commission headed by B. S. Mejlax in the department of the History of World Culture in the Academy of Sciences. It periodically organizes conferences, the proceedings of which have been published: *Sodružestvo nauk i tajny tvorčestva* 1968, *Xudožestvennoe vosprijatie* 1971 and Mejlax 1971.
[157] Birjukov and Geller 1973, p. 271.
[158] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[159] Barabaš 1974, Chapter 2, p. 131.
[160] *Ibid.*
[161] Ovsjannikov 1973.
[162] Kagan 1973, p. 34.
[163] Cf. Blakeley 1975.
[164] Kagan 1971, p. 57.
[165] *Loc. cit.*
[166] The present list amalgamates the slightly different lists in Kagan 1971, p. 58 and in Kagan 1973.
[167] Barabaš 1974, pp. 138–140.
[168] Mejlax 1971, pp. 46–47.
[169] Kagan 1972, pp. 100–101.
[170] Barabaš 1974, pp. 139–140.
[171] Cf. 'Proekt programmy kursa *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki*' 1948 and the ensuing discussion 'O novom proekte programmy po estetike' 1948.
[172] Peredovaja 1951.
[173] 'O zadačax marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki' 1955.
[174] *Voprosy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* 1956.
[175] Morawski 1973, p. 67. It is noteworthy that the best-known Polish Marxist aesthetician thought little of this program. He considered the historical sections superficial, while the involved sections on artistic genres and forms were criticized as belonging not to philosophical aesthetics but to the theories of the individual art forms. Moreover, not only are the sections about Socialist Realism and related topics overextensive and redundant, they give a one-sided view of artistic processes, Morawski's basis for criticism was that throughout the Soviets neglected the axiological nature of aesthetics.
[176] Maca 1964.
[177] *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.
[178] *Marksistskaja-leninskaja estetika* 1973, pp. 5–6.
[179] Kagan 1971, p. 60.
[180] Borev 1975, p. 25.
[181] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

CHAPTER II

[1] Morawski 1970; Pazura 1967.
[2] Solomon (ed.) 1973, p. 5.
[3] Beardsley 1975, p. 355.
[4] Lang and Williams (eds.) 1972, p. 2.
[5] Tucker 1969, p. 158.
[6] Lifšic 1938, p. 6.
[7] Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 5.
[8] Trofimov 1964, p. 53.
[9] Lifšic 1970, pp. 11–12.
[10] *Loc. cit.*
[11] Lifšic 1938, p. 7.
[12] Koch 1964, p. 36.
[13] Lifšic 1938, p. 6.
[14] Siekierska 1953, p. 129.
[15] Fréville (ed.) 1954, p. 119.
[16] Kołakowski 1976, p. 267.
[17] The present account is based on Morawski 1970 and Pazura 1967.
[18] Lifšic 1972 is a collection of his writings. The relevant piece is entitled 'Estetičeskie vzgljady Marksa', pp. 11–275.
[19] Pazura 1967 provides the following list: P. Struve: 'Marks o Goethe', *Mir Božij* 1898, reprinted in *Na raznye temy*, Petersburg 1902; A. Finn-Jenotaevskij: 'Marks ob iskusstve' in *K. Marks: Keri i Bastia*, Petersburg 1905; J. Denicke: 'Marks ob iskusstve', *Iskusstvo*, T. 1 1923; B. Arvatov, 'Marks o xudožestvennoj riztavracii', *Lef* 1923, 3.
[20] For a detailed examination of the period see Z. E. Apresjan 1966.
[21] *Marks i Engel's o literature: Novy materialy*. Kommentari F. Šillera i G. Lukača. M. 1933.
[22] 'Marks i suščnost' realizma. (K probleme socialističeskogo realizma)', *Natisk* 1933, 5–6.
[23] *Engel's kak literaturnyj kritik*, M., 1933.
[24] *Marks i Engel's ob iskusstve*, M., 1933, with a foreword by Lunačarskij.
[25] *Über Kunst und Literatur* 1968.
[26] *On Literature and Art* 1976.
[27] Morawski 1970, p. 303.
[28] Apresjan 1966, p. 39.
[29] Ovsjannikov's glimpse at the history of aesthetics, including Marx's and Engel's contribution, is reprinted in *Marksistskaja-leninskaja estetika* 1973.
[30] Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 6f.
[31] The elements of this tension are briefly discussed in Chapter 3 and more extensively in Chapter 5.
[32] The Russian titles are: 'Lev Tolstoj, kak zerkalo russkoj revoljucii', 'L. N. Tolstoj', 'L. N. Tolstoj i sovremennoe rabočie dviženie', 'Tolstoj i proletarskaja bor'ba', 'L. N. Tolstoj i ego epocha', 'Geroi "orovoročki" ', all in *V. I. Lenin: O Literature i iskusstve* 1969.
[33] 'Partijnaja organizacija i partijnaja literatura', first published in *Novaja žizn'*, 12, Nov. 13, 1905; *O literature i iskusstve* 1969, p. 86ff.

[34] *Lénine: Sur l'art et la littérature* 1975.
[35] Representative accounts include Ovsjannikov 1974 and Trofimov 1964 as well as the relevant introductions in *Istorija estetiki* 1970 and *O literature i iskusstve* 1969.
[36] *Lenin: On Literature and Art* 1970, p. 23.
[37] For a brief discussion of this controversy see James 1973, p. 15f.; also *Lénine: sur l'art et la littérature* 1975, p. 92f.
[38] The present account is based in large measure on Ščerbina 1974, especially Chapter 2, p. 21ff.
[39] *On Literature and Art* 1970, p. 28.
[40] Ščerbina 1974, pp. 26, 31.
[41] Lenin 1967, p. 335.
[42] *On Literature and Art* 1970, p. 45.
[43] Ščerbina 1974, p. 47.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.
[45] *On Literature and Art* 1970, pp. 20–21.
[46] Zimand 1957.
[47] E.g. Egorov 1959.
[48] E.g. Stolovič 1960. Stolovič was one of the leading advocates of the return to the young Marx, a position which, as we shall endeavor to show in Chapter 5, entails elements of 'revisionism'.
[49] Borev 1961, p. 89f.
[50] For details see Ermolaev 1963.
[51] V. I. Lenin: 'Ešče raz o provsojuzax', Soč. t. 33, p. 73, cited in Wetter 1958, p. 100.
[52] Cf. Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 36f; Ščerbina 1956; Mašinskij 1967; Novožilova 1968, in particular the Introduction.
[53] Maca 1967, p. 30; sometimes referred to as 'sociological schematism', cf. Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 39.
[54] Jordan 1967, pp. 342–343.
[55] Solomon (ed.) 1974, pp. 121–122.
[56] On the theory of the 'two acts of criticism' see Novožilova 1968 and Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 40.
[57] Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 40.
[58] Cited in Ovsjannikov 1974, p. 43.
[59] *Istorija estetiki*, t. 4, 1970.
[60] Lenin provided such a periodization in 'Iz prošlogo rabočej pečati v Rossii' excerpts of which are found in *V. I. Lenin: On Literature and Art* 1970: "The emancipation movement in Russia has passed through three main stages, corresponding to the three main classes of Russian society, which have left their impression on the movement: (1) the period of the nobility, roughly from 1825 to 1861; (2) the *raznočincy* or bourgeois-democratic period, approximately from 1861 to 1895, and (3) the proletarian period from 1895 to the present time", p. 97. For a discussion see James 1973, Chapter 2 and Ščerbina 1974, Chapter 5.
[61] Besides the sources already mentioned in the foregoing, the following are of interest: *Iz istorii estetičeskoj mysli novogo vremeni* 1959, in particular A. P. Belik: 'N. G. Černyševskij o krasote v dejstvitel'nosti', p. 166ff.; Rozental' 1948, Chapter 10; Naumova 1960; Bursov 1953; Karaganov 1955.
[62] Hare 1964, e.g. p. 64ff., p. 207ff.; Lampert 1965, 208ff.; Planty-Bonjour 1974,

pp. 52, 204, 205ff.
[63] Planty-Bonjour 1974, p. 204.
[64] Černyševskij 1950–1951.
[65] As quoted in James 1973, p. 90.
[66] Cf. below Chapter 4 for more complete statements.
[67] Tatarkiewicz 1976, p. 330.

CHAPTER III

[1] The discussion took place on the pages on *Voprosy literatury*. The authors were Nujkin, Kagan, Runin, Kondratenko, Nedzveckij, Astachov, Nujkin (1966a) and the official statement by Mjasnikov.
[2] *Voprosy estetiki* 1958,1. Besides the article by Pažitnov cited below this volume contained several other essays of interest: Nedošivin 1958 and 1958a, Tasalov 1958.
[3] Egorov 1957.
[4] In *Voprosy filosofii* the following articles appeared in this polemic: Kornienko 1961, Pavlov 1961, El'sberg 1961, Vajman 1962, Ivanov 1962, Stolovič 1962, Permjakov 1961. In *Filosofskie nauki* they were: Limanceva 1961, Stolovič 1961a, Ivanov 1962, Napolova 1962, Xarčev 1962.
[5] 'K obsuždeniju voprosa o suščnosti estetičeskogo' 1962.
[6] 'Obsuždenie voprosa "priroda estestičeskogo" (obzor diskussii)' 1962.
[7] Soviet authors do not employ the expression 'relationism' which is popular among their Polish colleagues, e.g. Morawski 1974 and Dziemidok 1968. Tatarkiewicz employs it in his history of aesthetics to designate positions held as long ago as the Middle Ages.
[8] Stolovič 1966, Xarčev 1966, Kagan 1966, Korotkov 1966. For more up to date information see Školut 1976.
[9] Dmitrieva 1960, p. 14.
[10] Stolovič 1959, p. 7.
[11] Vanslov 1957, p. 26.
[12] Stolovič 1956, p. 73.
[13] Burov 1956, especially the Introduction and Chapter 1.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 30.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 59f.
[16] *Osnovy Marksistsko-leninskoj filosofii* 1971, p. 399.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 401.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 398.
[19] The distinction between a cosmocentric (Engels and Soviet philosophy) and an anthropological – 'anthropocentric' (Kołakowski and Neo-Marxism) Marxism is stressed by J. M. Bocheński. Cf., e.g., Introduction to *Guide to Marxist Philosophy* 1972. That distinction is developed in this study in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER IV

[1] Vanslov 1957, p. 26.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 32f.

[3] Stolovič 1961a, p. 172.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[5] Stolovič 1956, p. 78.
[6] Egorov 1956, p. 111.
[7] Egorov 1959, p. 91.
[8] "The aesthetic properties of material objects are on the same level (*stojat v odnom rjadu*) as mechanical, physical and chemical properties." Kornienko 1962, p. 21.
[9] "The aesthetic properties of material objects should not be fully identified with the mechanical, physical and chemical properties." *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[10] Dmitrieva 1960, p. 161.
[11] Kogan 1959, p. 148.
[12] E.g. Tasalov 1971.
[13] Nedošivin 1958, pp. 42–43.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 51. Italics in the original.
[15] Tasalov 1958, p. 86.
[16] Pažitnov 1958, p. 27.
[17] E.g. Pažitnov 1958, p. 129: "The aesthetic properties of nature ... are objective properties for a highly developed social aesthetic sense".
[18] Stolovič 1959, pp. 41–42.
[19] Vanslov 1957, p. 59.
[20] For further remarks about this point see Chapter 5, especially Section 5.5.
[21] Stolovič 1956, p. 76.
[22] Borev 1961.
[23] E.g. "We call beautiful the reflection in consciousness of the law of a determinate quality. Beauty is the same thing as truth, but it is a truth of a particular quality, both according to its object as well as to the state it calls forth in the subject." Burov 1956, p. 185. The position described in these terms comes much closer to relationism than to the subjectivism of which Burov was sometimes accused. For a critique see Stolovič 1959, p. 33.
[24] Stolovič 1959, p. 70.
[25] Vanslov 1957, p. 89.
[26] Gol'dentrixt 1959, pp. 24, 31.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[29] Gol'dentrixt 1960, p. 196.
[30] Stolovič 1961, pp. 57–58.
[31] Stolovič 1961a, p. 171.
[32] Stolovič 1961, p. 59f.
[33] Stolovič 1959, pp. 63–64.
[34] Cited in Alekseev 1957, p. 173.
[35] Vanslov 1957, p. 52f.; Stolovič 1959, p. 33; Stolovič 1961, p. 55f.
[36] Stolovič 1961, p. 56.
[37] Tatarkiewicz 1975, p. 140ff.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[39] Kornienko 1962, p. 23.
[40] Dmitrieva 1960.
[41] Vajman 1962, 1964.

[42] Pospelov 1960, 1965.
[43] Dmitrieva 1960, p. 23.
[44] *Loc. cit.*
[45] Vajman 1964, p. 28.
[46] *Loc. cit.*
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 30; also Vajman 1962, p. 91.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[49] *Loc. cit.*
[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.
[51] Pospelov 1960, p. 163.
[52] *Loc. cit.*
[53] Stolovič 1962, pp. 113–114.
[54] Pospelov 1962, p. 163.
[55] Pospelov is in fact looking for the basis of evaluation, of the hierarchy of aesthetically valent objects in the structure of the objects, where the laws of matter are more or less perfectly realized, concretized. Pospelov 1960, p. 165f.; Pospelov 1965, p. 86f.
[56] Dmitrieva 1960, p. 20.
[57] "In his aesthetic evaluation of nature man cannot not introduce his human measure. He repulses what brings about discord in his life and evaluates the life of nature in its correlation with man. But this does not exclude that the general principle of beauty – harmony – is drawn from his knowledge of nature as it is." *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[58] Tasalov 1958, p. 93.
[59] Kornienko 1961, p. 109.
[60] Dmitrieva 1960, p. 26.
[61] Cf., e.g., Srednij 1974, Krjukovskij 1965, 1974, Kornienko 1970, Šeštakov 1973, Kagan 1971.
[62] 'Zadači sovetskoj estetiki', 1948, p. 284.
[63] 'Proekt programmy kursa *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki*' 1948, p. 340.
[64] 'O zadačax marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki', 1955, pp. 77, 78.
[65] 'Diskussija o predmete marksistsko-leninskoj estetike', 1956.
[66] Skaterščikov 1974.
[67] Lenin 1947, p. 67.
[68] *Kratkij slovar' po estetike* 1963, p. 146.
[69] Bezobraznoe, vozvyšennoe, garmonija, geroičeskoe, gracija, dramatizm, idilija, izjaščnoe, komičeskoe, krasota, nizmennoe, patetičeskoe, plastika, prekrasnoe, smešnoe, tragičeskoe, fars, ekstravagantnost'.
[70] Borev 1960, p. 99.
[71] Dmitrieva 1960, p. 13.
[72] Pospelov 1965, p. 96f.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 111.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[76] T. G. Grigorjan, cited in Stolovič 1961a, p. 164.
[77] Kornienko 1961, p. 112.
[78] ". . . The aesthetic in nature and society is founded on the same principles. Universal interconnection and the principles of development appear in a variety of forms in nature as well as in social life. Striving toward harmony, purposefulness and fullness exist in

people's social life", *loc. cit.*

[79] ". . . every human personality of a class society belongs . . . to a determinate socio-historical kind and can be distinguished by a relative superiority in its kind. It can possess certain aesthetic properties . . .", Pospelov 1965, p. 126.

[80] *Loc. cit.*

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[82] Vanslov 1957, p. 159.

[83] Tasalov 1958, p. 88.

[84] Burov 1956, p. 222.

[85] E.g. Stolovič 1959, especially Chapter 1.

[86] Vanslov 1956, p. 64.

[87] Borev 1960, p. 123.

[88] Burov 1956, p. 185. Cf. above Note 29.

[89] Vanslov 1957, p. 85.

[90] *Loc. cit.*

[91] Vanslov 1957, pp. 50–51.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[93] Stolovič 1956, p. 78.

[94] Vanslov 1957, p. 55.

[95] Gol'dentrixt 1959, p. 14.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[97] Stolovič 1959, p. 83.

[98] Stolovič 1961, p. 49.

[99] *Loc. cit.*

[100] ". . . the content of the aesthetic property . . . is the natural object itself in its . . . relation to society, i.e. the content contains . . . both social as well as natural elements constituting the object . . . the form of the aesthetic property of social phenomena . . . is a purely natural form." Stolovič 1961a, p. 171.

[101] For more extensive treatment of this problem, see below the last section of Chapter 5.

[102] "In the past the comic, tragic, sublime in certain aesthetic systems were considered as varieties of the beautiful. This is not so. They are autonomous aesthetic categories even though they are closely connected with the beautiful." Borev 1960, p. 101.

[103] *Loc. cit.*

[104] Stolovič 1959, pp. 99–100.

[105] Cf. below Chapter 4, 4.342, p. 129f. on the aesthetic ideal.

[106] Stolovič 1959, p. 100.

[107] *On Literature and Art* 1976, pp. 94–95.

[108] Stolovič 1959, p. 95.

[109] Tatarkiewicz 1975, p. 185.

[110] This idea is discussed in Chapter 5 under the heading 'Social Being', Section 5.4.

[111] Permjakov 1961, p. 114.

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[114] 'K obsuždeniju voprosa o suščnosti estetičeskogo', 1963, p. 174.

[115] Eremeev 1969, p. 13.

[116] *Loc. cit.*

[117] The problematic has been sketched in Chapter 3 and a detailed discussion of the

question is reserved for Chapter 5, especially the section on practice.

[118] Cf. below Section 5.31 'Excursus: Now-Natural Needs and the Social Mediation of Nature'.

[119] The material for the following comparison is gathered from Tatarkiewicz 1975, in particular Chapter 11, 'The Aesthetic Experience; History of the Concept'.

[120] Burov 1956, p. 203.

[121] *Ibid.*, pp. 201–202.

[122] Stolovič 1959, p. 118.

[123] Stolovič 1956, p. 77.

[124] Stolovič 1961, p. 69.

[125] ". . . the representation of beauty arises in man when he begins to come to realize the connection and unity of processes being perfected in the world . . .", Dmitrieva 1960a, pp. 163–164.

[126] Dmitrieva 1956, p. 36.

[127] Nedošivin 1958 pays particular attention to this question. He follows the lines of the argument laid down by M. Lifšic inthe early '30s.

[128] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[129] "In an object which man changes practically there is 'realized' man's subjective aim; in the same way the given object becomes a reflection of the active subject, of his thoughts, ideas, feelings, wishes. Man sees himself in the world created by him." *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[130] *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* 1960, p. 183.

[131] Iezuitov 1958, p. 110. Like Nedošivin Iezuitov is here following Lifšic, a fact which he fails to acknowledge.

[132] Nedošivin 1958, p. 45.

[133] Further discussion of this point and associated difficulties is contained in Section 5.6 of Chapter 5.

[134] Kondratenko 1964.

[135] *Ibid.*, pp. 228, 231, 259.

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

[137] Morawski 1964.

[138] "It is impossible to accept a postion according to which the aesthetic experience determines what the aesthetic object is . . .". *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[139] Gol'dentrixt 1959, p. 21.

[140] Cf., e.g., Nedošivin 1958, p. 55: ". . . the aesthetic suffers outside of the practical interest of social man, since it thereby would lack objective, living content."

[141] "Aesthetic relations of man to reality are *social* relations. Aesthetic properties and qualities of concrete phenomena are attainable to conscious realization (*osoznaniju*) only to social man." *Ibid.*, p. 54.

[142] "The aesthetic has as its premisses natural, biological properties, but it could arise only in a social-historical process of a practical interchange between man and the environment. Having come about the aesthetic ceased to be natural and took on a qualitatively new, historico-societal character." Iezuitov 1964, p. 103.

[143] Tatarkiewicz 1975, p. 385.

[144] Plekhanov's theory of social psychology as distinct from ideology is today gaining increasing attention among Marxists-Leninists as a way out of these difficulties. Cf. e.g. Kostyrko 1974 and Kagan 1969.

[145] A recent good discussion of Socialist Realism in relation to certain principles of Soviet aesthetics is provided by James 1973.
[146] *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* 1960, p. 185.
[147] *Kratikij slovar' po estetike* 1963, see the entries 'Aesthetic activity', p. 78ff., 'Aesthetic perception', p. 39ff., 'Aesthetic enjoyment', p. 277ff., 'Aesthetic judgement', p. 347ff., 'Aesthetic Taste', p. 28ff.
[148] Pospelov 1965, p. 144.
[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145.
[150] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[151] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[152] *Ibid.*, p. 146ff.
[153] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[154] ". . . the aesthetic ideal as a category . . . synthesizing the taste, sense representations of the beautiful, the concrete understanding of the goals and tasks of social and artistic progress." Murian 1964, p. 310.
[155] *FE* 2, p. 195.
[156] *Ibid.*, p. 198.
[157] Cf., e.g., the entry 'Ideal' in a *Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 202 in which the aesthetic ideal is distinguished from the social ideal and ethical ideal. Also Murian 1964 and *FE* 2, p. 199f.
[158] E.g. "The aesthetic ideal is nothing else than a general representation of the world and society, according to which social relations emerge in the quality of a condition of the free unfolding of all capabilities and forces of every individual and the whole world emerges as the result of the free affirmation of man in it, as the reality of his being." Vanslov 1957, p. 107. The typical definition is that given in the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 202: "Aesthetic ideal, the free, fullest, all-round harmonious development of the physical and spiritual capabilities of the individual possible in a given concrete historical conditions."
[159] Murian 1964, p. 315f.
[160] Kagan 1960.
[161] Tatarkiewicz 1975, p. 40.
[162] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–45.
[163] Davletov 1957, p. 167.
[164] "Production not only supplies the want with material, but supplies the material with a want . . . (. . .) The object of art, as well as any other product, creates an artistic and beauty-enjoying public. Production thus produces not only an object for the individual, but also an individual for the object." *On Literature and Art*, 1976, p. 121.
[165] Burov 1956, p. 136.
[166] ". . . the content of art is human life with its natural (social and natural) environment, taken in the synthesis of its sides and thought through by the artist in the light of determinate social ideals." Burov 1953, p. 153.
[167] "All those entities which are unveiled by art and constitutes its ideative content are human essences (*suščnosti*), i.e. social above all." Burov 1956, p. 109.
[168] E.g. Davletov 1957 and Stolovič 1959, p. 33ff.
[169] Stolovič 1959, p. 33.
[170] E.g. Stolovič 1959, p. 223: "In the artistry of art (*xudožestvennosti iskusstva*) the aesthetic manifests itself on two planes: first, art reflects objectively existing aesthetic

properties, and, second, art is the result of the artist's creative activity."
[171] Vanslov 1956, p. 76.
[172] Tasalov 1958, p. 101. Stolovič 1959, p. 223 responded to this criticism by calling Tasalov a 'subjectivist'.
[173] We shall return to these problems in greater detail in Chapter 5.
[174] *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoj estetiki* 1960, pp. 197–198.
[175] Burov 1956, p. 109.
[176] Dmitrieva 1960.
[177] Egorov 1959, p. 193.
[178] Kornienko 1962, p. 95.
[179] *Kratkij slovar' po estetike* 1963, p. 333.
[180] Burov 1956, p. 144.
[181] Tatarkiewicz 1975, p. 313ff.
[182] "Realism, to my mind, implies besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances". Engels to Margaret Harkness in *On Literature and Art* 1976, p. 90.
[183] Cf. the articles in the *Kratkij slovar' po estetike*: 'Artistic image', p. 240ff., 'Artistic generalization', p. 244ff.
[184] Lifšic 1976, p. 116.

CHAPTER V

[1] Cf. Kołakowski 1971, p. 405.
[2] Lenin 1967, p. 327.
[3] Lenin 1955, p. 63.
[4] Stolovič quotes with approval the introduction to the 1956 edition of Marx's and Engel's early writings: ". . . in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx, in spite of Feuerbach's influence, began to lay down the foundations of that revolutionary materialistic world view which soon received further development in the *Holy Family* and, in particular, in the *German Ideology*." On this basis, Stolovič concludes that it is necessary to see a Marxist content in the Hegelian and Feuerbachian terminology employed by Marx. Stolovič 1959, p. 37, note.
[5] Bakuradze 1956.
[6] The works most frequently criticized were: E. Thier, *Das Menschenbild des jungen Marx*, Göttingen 1957; E. Thier, *Karl Marx, Nationaloekonomie und Philosophie*, Köln-Berlin 1950; J. Hippolite, *Etudes sur Marx et Hegel*, Paris 1955; J. Y. Calvez, *La Pensée de Karl Marx*, Paris 1956; J. Hommes, 'Von Hegel zu Marx', in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, München 1953, S. 378–000.
[7] Pažitnov 1960.
[8] Ojzerman 1962.
[9] Lapin 1968.
[10] Vanslov 1956, pp. 42–43 note.
[11] Stolovič 1959, p. 37.
[12] Pažitnov 1960, p. 152.
[13] Permjakov 1961, p. 116.
[14] Vasquez 1973, p. 47.
[15] Plamenatz 1975, p. 75f.

[16] Tucker 1969, p. 158.
[17] There are, it is true, extracts from plays by Shakespeare in the *Manuscripts*, but Marx is concerned to illustrate his moral views about the debasing effects of money rather than dwell on the aesthetic qualities of Shakespeare's art.
[18] Tucker (ed.) 1972, p. 61.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[23] "The object of labor is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he contemplates himself in a world he has created." *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[24] "The forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present." *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[25] "The eye has become a *human* eye, just as its *object* has become a social, *human* object – an object emanating from man for man." *Ibid.*, p. 73.
[26] Solomon (ed.) 1973, p. 65.
[27] Cf. e.g. Pazura 1967: "Marx accepted from the tradition formulations [which are not] completely in accord with his own novel conceptions . . .", p. 69.
[28] Morawski 1974, p. 41ff.
[29] Tucker (ed.) 1972, p. 74.
[30] Easton and Guddat (eds.) 1967, p. 394.
[31] Kołakowski 1971, p. 407.
[32] This position is maintained with particular acuity by Pažitnov 1958, 1960 and Tasalov 1958.
[33] Well-known proponents of the continuity of the old with the young Marx are Calvez, Tucker, McLellan, Fetscher, Avinieri, Schmidt, *et al.*
[34] 'Notes on Adolph Wagner', p. 190, in Carver 1975.
[35] Heller 1974, pp. 23, 27f.
[36] Easton and Guddat (eds.) 1967, p. 420; Heller 1974, p. 41f.
[37] Heller 1974, pp. 31–35 and Chapter 2.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 31f.
[39] "Neither nature objectively nor nature subjectively is directly given in a form adequate to the *human* being," Tucker 1972, p. 94. An even stronger claim comes later: "But *nature* too, taken abstractly, for itself – nature fixed in isolation from man – is nothing for man." *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[40] Heller 1974, p. 32.
[41] Kołakowski 1968, p. 38ff.
[42] Schmidt 1971.
[43] Jordan 1967.
[44] Avinieri 1971.
[45] Here I follow Heller 1974, p. 40, who, however, does not cite the relevant Marxian texts.
[46] Kołakowski 1968, p. 46.
[47] 'Notes on Adolph Wagner', p. 191, in Carver 1975, p. 191; Kołakowski 1968, p. 49, "Language cannot be compared with a transparent glass through which one can contemplate the 'objective' wealth of reality. It is a set of tools we use to adapt ourselves to

reality and to adapt it to our needs – active tools, tools of construction, not of exploration."

[48] "In abstract, nothing prevents us from dissecting surrounding material of reality into fragments constructed in a manner completely different from what we are used to. Thus, speaking more simply, we could build a world where there would be no such objects as 'horse', 'leaf', 'star' and others allegedly devised by nature. Instead, there might be, for example, such objects as 'half a horse and a piece of river', 'my ear and the moon' . . . (. . .)". Kołakowski 1968, p. 48.

[49] Marx to Kugelmann, cited in Schmidt 1971, p. 98.

[50] Schmidt 1971, p. 95.

[51] "Society is always faced with the same laws of nature. Its existing historical structure determines the form in which men are subjected to these laws, their mode of operation, their field of application and the degree to which they can be understood and made socially useful." Schmidt 1971, p. 98.

[52] Kołakowski 1971.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 409.

[54] Moscovici 1977, p. 40.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 40f.

[56] Tucker 1969, p. 131. Kołakowski says, for example, "We do not have the right to suppose that pre-existing reality bears the qualities of man's reality, we do not have the tools to plumb nature and the kind of distortions it undergoes when it abandons its transcendency to display itself to us." Kołakowski 1968, p. 54.

[57] Moscovici 1977, p. 42.

[58] "The practical character of cognition has for Marx a sense other than that limited to the observation that practical needs determine cognition, and that practical activity verifies hypotheses. Human practice is itself the proper object of cognition, that means that our knowledge can never free itself from the situational, practical character of its acquiring", Kolakowski 1976, pp. 410–411.

[59] Schmidt 1971, p. 191.

[60] *Dialectics of Nature*, Appendix I, p. 329, cited in Schmidt 1971, p. 191.

[61] Jaroszewski 1974, p. 107.

[62] Marx, Engels 1968, p. 372.

[63] Cackowski, Z.: *Treść poznawczych wrażeń zmysłowych*, Warszawa 1962, p. 30 cited in Jaroszewski 1974, p. 136.

[64] Kołakowski 1971, pp. 409; 1976, p. 409.

[65] Cf., e.g., Avinieri 1971, p. 66ff.

[66] E.g. Iezuitov 1959.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[68] E.g. ". . . history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims". *Holy Family*, p. 125, in Jordan 1972, p. 192.

[69] Tucker (ed.) 1972, p. 75.

[70] Pažitnov 1960 "In the process of the practical mastery of the world the ability to perceive the world sensibly is found as the only human sensibility . . .", p. 160.

[71] Pažitnov 1958, p. 31.

[72] Tasalov 1958, p. 79.

[73] Gol'dentrixt 1959, p. 11.

[74] Solomon (ed.) 1974, p. 53.

[75] Jaroszewski 1974, p. 197ff., p. 209ff.
[76] Engels 1968, p. 350.
[77] Tucker 1972, p. 73.
[78] Gol'dentrixt 1959, p. 22.
[79] Tucker (ed.) 1972, p. 73.
[80] Gol'dentrixt 1959, p. 12.
[81] Pažitnov 1960, p. 159.
[82] *Loc. cit.*
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[84] *Loc. cit.*
[85] Vanslov 1957, p. 46.
[86] Stolovič 1959, p. 58.
[87] Nedošivin 1958 p. 45.
[88] *Loc. cit.*
[89] Tucker (ed.) 1972, p. 62.
[90] Stolovič 1959, p. 41.
[91] Tucker (ed.) 1972, p. 4.
[92] Lenin, *Soč.* T.1, p. 134, cited in Vanslov 1957, p. 36.
[93] Stolovič 1959, p. 36.
[94] Vanslov 1957, p. 36. Another typical example: "The beautiful as an objective quality exists outside of a subjective relation to reality . . . for this relation itself assumes the presence of objective aesthetic qualities and arises on their basis. But the beautiful does not exist outside of the objective *appropriation* of reality in social practice . . .". *Ibid.*, p. 78.
[95] Stolovič 1959, p. 36.
[96] Tasalov 1958, p. 75.
[97] *German Ideology*, pp. 68–9, in Jordan 1971, p. 142.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[101] Heller 1974, p. 46.
[102] Tucker 1969a, p. 220.
[103] Marcuse sums up this argument. "In Marxian theory, this antagonism [between man's essence and his existence] is a *historical* fact, and is to be resolved in a society which reconciles the existence of man with his essence by providing the material conditions for the development of all human faculties. If and when this has been achieved, the traditional basis of art would have been undermined – through the realization of the content of art. Prior to this historical event, art retains its critical cognitive function: to represent the still transcendental truth, to sustain the image of freedom against a denying reality. With the realization of freedom, art would not longer be a vessel of truth." *Soviet Marxism. A Critical Analysis*, New York–London 1958, p. 130, cited in Lichtheim 1974, p. 34.
[104] Lenin 1967, p. 56.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[106] O. G. Drobnickij proposed a sketch of a theory of the social object in his essay 'Priroda i granicy sfery obščestvennogo bytija čeloveka', in *Problema čeloveka v sovremennoj filosofii* 1969, p. 212ff. A more recent elaborate attempt at such an ontology,

employing categories from Roman Ingarden's ontology, is that by Lipiec 1972.

[107] Vanslov 1957, p. 59.

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[109] Gol'dentrixt 1959, p. 49 writes: "The aesthetic appropriation in its positive expression is above all the freest and fullest manifestation and incorporation of all of man's creative forces and capabilities in products of labor which he governs and the creation of which provides him with pleasure."

[110] Cf. above on the aesthetic relation.

[111] Cf. above p. 130ff.

[112] Cf. above p. 148ff.

[113] Solov'ev 1961 discusses more thoroughly than anyone else the Hegelian background of this concept and argues in favor of a naturist interpretation.

[114] Two authors who employ Lifšic in this fashion are Nedošivin 1958 and Iezuitov 1964.

[115] Lifšic 1973, p. 82.

[116] Vanslov 1957, p. 44.

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 83

[118] Stolovič 1959, p. 58.

[119] Tasalov 1958, p. 83.

[120] Pažitnov 1960, p. 151.

[121] Fridlender 1968, p. 108.

[122] *Loc. cit.*

[123] Iezuitov 1964.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

[1] For some information about the state of Soviet axiology during the sixties see Kline 1971.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS USED:

FE	*Filosofskaja enciklopedija*
FN	*Filosofskie nauki*
VE	*Voprosy estetiki*
VF	*Voprosy filosofii*
VL	*Voprosy literatury*
VLGU	*Vestnik leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*
VMGU	*Vestnik moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*
SST	*Studies in Soviet Thought*

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